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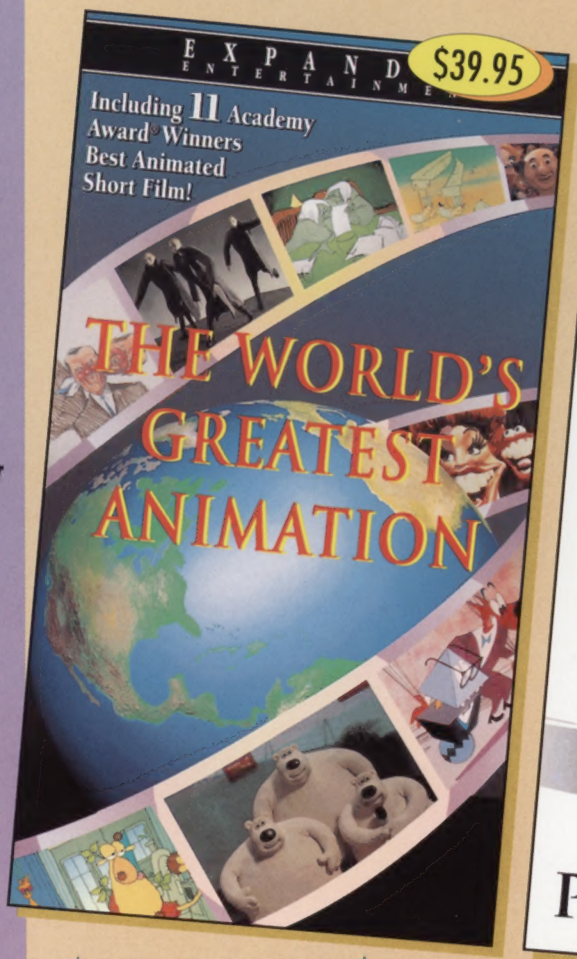
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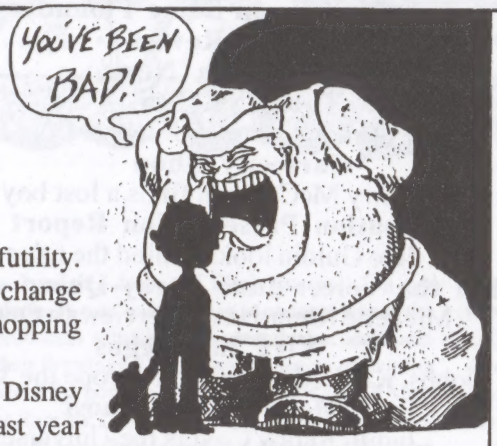
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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine



Publisher-torial

Two Bricks, A Nudge and A Bouquet

Criticizing Disney is an exercise in futility. I don't expect a response. I don't expect a change in their policy. I certainly don't expect a whopping advertising block to be forthcoming.

This is a miniscule item on the Disney profit agenda, but it really bothers me: Last year Disney released a Fall/Winter merchandise catalog with a "faux" Dalmatian fur coat for young girls. What-the-hell were you thinking, Eisner? Did anyone in marketing actually watch *101 Dalmatians* ?

John Kricfalusi's private Nick list notwithstanding, what little girl wants to emulate Cruella DeVil? I can see the marketing people now: "Make sure we use the word "faux", so kids will know we didn't skin real dogs to make this coat." If the Disney Corporation doesn't respect it's own heritage, I guess they're fair game for well-deserved slings and arrows. I imagine if Walt were alive, he'd take the marketing bunch out behind the woodshed.

I'll be brief on this next item. Professional animators who claim to never have heard of Osamu Tezuka's *The Jungle Emperor* are like American History buffs who claim no knowledge of the contribution of Lafayette.

Moving on to our *Song of the South* screening with African-Americans. Nothing controversial to report. Richard E. Brown summed up the experience: " I expected to be offended, but now I want a video for my collection." A friend, Robert Pendleton, says his daughter Deidra would love to watch a video of *Song of the South*. We couldn't find anyone who didn't want a video or laser copy of *Song of the South*. (For more background on *Song of the South,* see Tim Smith's article and Andrew Osmond's report in this issue.)

The last time I got excited about a Hanna-Barbera cartoon product, automobiles had huge fins and Dick Nixon was a swarthy Vice-President. Thanks to Fred Seibert, I am looking forward to the end product of Hanna-Barbera's Shorts Program. Great idea, Fred. To quote a friend, "I haven't been this excited since the pigs ate my brother!" – *Patrick*

Just for fun, the publisher is compiling and illustrating a catalog of inappropriate marketing ideas. For example: *Little Mermaid Brand Crab Legs* or *The Official Henwen Football*. So far, we have three pages of material. If you'd like to contribute an idea to this project, write to: Patrick Duquette, c/o The Animato! Studio, 92 Thayer Road, Monson, MA, 01057. If you send an idea we use in the magazine, we'll give you credit and a chance for glory.

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About the Cover...When legendary animation director Ralph Bakshi offered to create an original cover for **ANIMATO!**, publisher Pat Duquette jumped at the chance. Ralph has finished his first short for the cartoon network, and is now on the way to the second.

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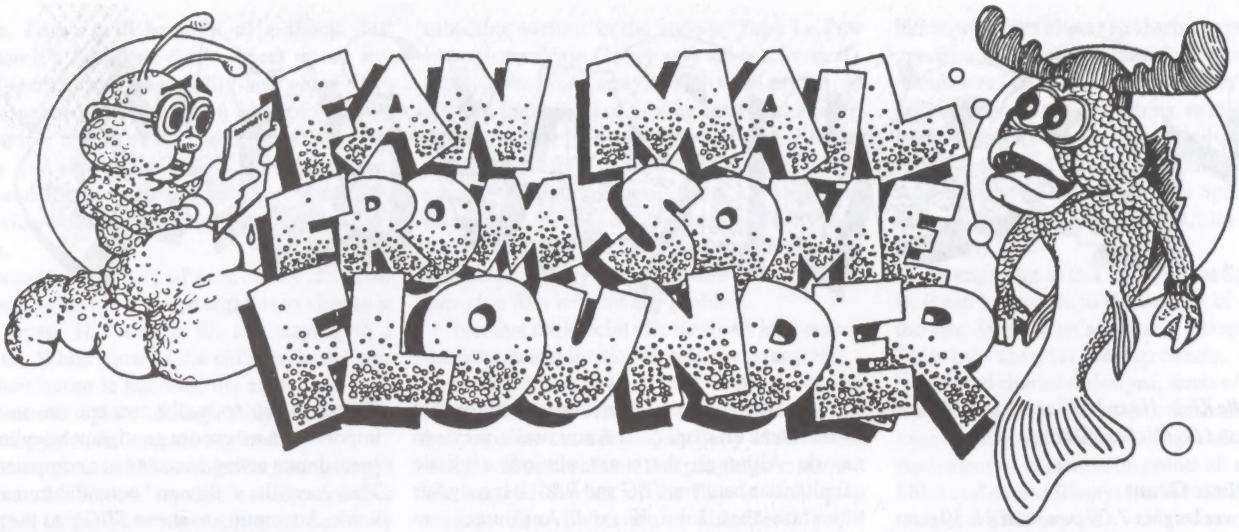
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"Didn't G. Michael Dobbs pay attention to any of this?"
Dan Alexander
Montevallo, AL

I think your review of *The Lion King* (Issue 29) was way off. You didn't like the music, and said Disney should use composers instead of "aging rock stars." Well, Disney **DID** use composer Hans Zimmer for the film—Elton John and Tim Rice **WROTE** the songs. They did not perform them in the movie. I thought the music was the best that Disney has ever had in a feature. Apparently I'm not the only one who liked the music, since the soundtrack has been #1 on the sales charts for six weeks.

I don't think comedy is out of place in a drama like *The Lion King*. Life (and cartoons) shouldn't be all drama or all comedy. The film would be too depressing if it didn't have comedy.

I think Scar is a "classic" Disney villain. I think the audience **DID** take Scar seriously, especially when Scar threw Mufasa to his death. The theater was silent during that sequence when I saw the film.

Why don't the female lions oppose what Scar is doing? Probably because they think he is the true King, and Pride Rock is their home.

How long is Simba away? It doesn't really matter.

Why does the lions' kingdom wither up under Scar? Because Scar has hundreds of hyenas to feed. Hyenas are natural enemies of lions (and almost every other African animal) and are destructive in the movie.

What does Simba do to restore everything? He takes his place in the Circle of Life, as his father told him to do (didn't G. Michael Dobbs pay attention to any of this?), and remembers his father's words of wisdom (such as respecting all life, which is something Scar didn't do).

I think *The Lion King* was a wonderful film, and judging from the film's success, I'm not alone. It was great to see a cartoon where the producers actually put a great deal of work into their drawings. I'm so used to seeing or hearing about the popular sloppy animation on TV such as *Rugrats, Doug, The Critic, The Simpsons, Ren and Stimpy, Beavis and Butt-Head* that *The Lion King* is a very fresh and welcome change. The artists on *The Lion King* took pride in their work, which is something I don't think those other shows have done.

A word about the *Jafar* video: *The Return of Jafar* video was really a promotion for the upcoming *Aladdin* TV series, and shouldn't be thought of as the future of Disney animated features. All of Disney's syndicated TV series have had hour-long "origin" episodes. *The Return of Jafar* was *Aladdin's* origin episode, marketed in a very misleading way.

Hmm...everytime I write a review on a Disney picture I get blasted! Good review, bad review..it doesn't matter! For the record, though, there were many other animations fans who noticed the same plot holes as I did.

I never wrote that I mistook *Jafar* as the "future of Disney animated features." I was indeed critical of how the Disney Studios used their *Aladdin* franchise for a sloppy, short, direct-to-video sequel, and how they sold it was definitely misleading.

Since you didn't care for my review of *The Lion King*, you might not want to read our Toon News section in this issue as that might really upset you! GMD

Avery Mystery Solved?
Stan Sargent
San Francisco

I am writing in response to John Province's request, on page 44 of Issue 29 of **ANIMATO!**, for further information concerning the story Walter Lantz was unable to repeat about Tex Avery leaving his studio.

For what it is worth, I looked up the chapter on Avery in The Great Cartoon Directors by Jeff Lenburg (1983, MacFarland & Co., Inc.). On pages 66 and 67 I found the following:

One of his (Avery's) friends told him to put in an application at the inking and painting department at Walter Lantz Studios. Confident in his abilities as an animator, Avery followed his friend's advice and within a couple of days he was hired into the department. His duties included painting backgrounds for Oswald cartoons. Eventually he became an in-betweener, providing drawings that went between those that animators had produced. But even though Avery had found his proper niche in life, he still wasn't content with his situation. Avery had no ill feelings about his job or boss. Instead, he was upset at himself for not putting out "good enough drawings." Avery was a perfectionist and it concerned him that he couldn't finish a cleaned drawing; he had to have an animator come over and smooth out the rough edges for him. In order to rectify the situation, Avery spent long hours at the studio and remained up late at home to work on his drawings. As months dragged on, they began to improve and even impress his contemporaries. In addition, Avery wrote gags and stories for a few Lantz cartoons, two of which he directed without receiving screen credit. But his tenure at Lantz didn't last long. Tex left the studio because Universal Pictures, Lantz's cartoon distributor, refused to offer him an additional $10 to $15 a week.

I hope this information helps to answer your questions, at least in part.

Continued on page 68

TOONREVIEWS

By Michelle Klein-Häss, Michael Draine, Andrew Osmond and G. Michael Dobbs

The Brothers Grunt
On MTV weeknights 7:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.
Creative Director/Producer: Danny Antonucci

When I saw the preview of this show on the *MTV Animation Weekend*, I frankly didn't think much of it. I was impressed by the fluency and power of the animation, and by little else.

Now that the show's been airing awhile, it seems as if my verdict on the show is largely the same. Which is disappointing, because this is a creation of Danny Antonucci, the talented guy responsible for the perennial "outrageous/sick n' twisted" animated short hit, *Lupo The Butcher*. And another sick puppy from Vancouver, Mike Grimshaw (of *Quiet Please* infamy) is boarding and animating on this project.

The premise is kind of shaky in the first place...perhaps a product of the Dada/Surrealist technique called "the exquisite corpse," where several storytellers get together and improvise a story. There really wasn't much to start with: the Brothers were apparently first seen in an MTV station ID bumper where they all were squatting on commodes, and one ends up pinching a loaf in the shape of the MTV logo.

The yarn was spun where the Brothers were actually strange humanoids, born from a boil on the back of a fat "queen bee" variation on their kind; (this is apparently how they reproduce). The humanoids all live in a monastery, where they live on a diet of martinis and melted cheese, and, I guess, meditate and do whatever boil-bred monastic humanoids do. The Brothers Grunt, all named after EZ-Listening crooners, (Perry [Como], Frank [Sinatra], Sammy [Davis Jr.], Bing [Crosby], Dean [Martin] and Tony [Bennett]) are to be sworn in as fullfledged members of the order when Perry is revealed to be the Chosen One, their new leader. Perry gets inadvertently flushed down the toilet, and his mute, grunting siblings are sent to find him. And so begins the tale.

Again, the animation is well done. They use a limited animation style which is nonetheless fluid and expressive in the tradition of Spumco-era *Ren & Stimpy*, and of course the animation that which was on display in Antonucci's previous work. Although there are obvious stylistic similarities between *TBG* and *R&S*, it is only fair to state that John K. and Antonucci are contemporaries, and probably share many common influences. And Antonucci and Grimshaw get away with a hell of a lot more here than Spumco ever could with *R&S*. There are wildly funny but not-for-the-squeamish gags all over the place here, with the Tex Avery double-take taken to very squishy extremes. And if you can stomach them, they'll occasionally send you rolling on the floor laughing. Like when Sammy Grunt's heart leaps all the way out of his chest and slaps him around with its aorta to signal that he has fallen in love...with a floor lamp. Bodily fluids, sludge and other unsanitary stuff are the stock in trade here on *TBG*.

But the jokes cannot make up for storylines that feel slapped together in a very perfunctory and off-hand manner, and for the fact that *TBG* has been straitjacketed into the same format as *Beavis &Butthead*: animation parceled out in miserly dribs and drabs, with music videos filling up the slack space. In *B&B*, the videos actually do make sense as part of the total package...the teen losers spend most of their time watching MTV of course, and their commentaries on videos often make up for the weaker stories and enhance the strong ones. But it is very rare that the videos work on *TBG*. One bit where the video for "I'm Too Sexy" pops up as a video karaoke number when Frank shows up in a tacky Tiki bar is not bad at all. But most of the time, the videos stop the flow of the show right in its tracks.

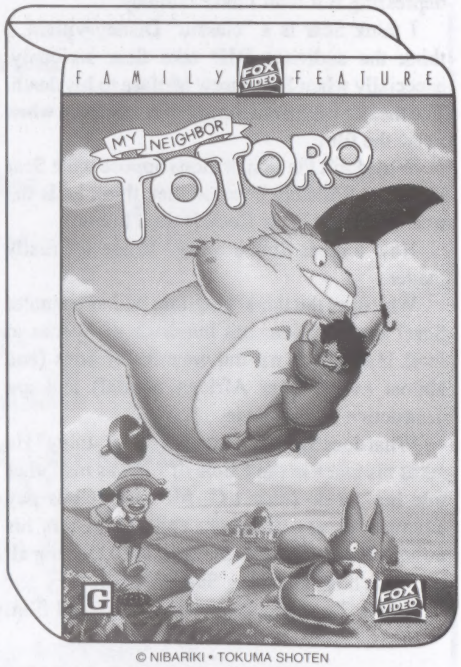
How could *TBG* be made to work? I think that *TBG* should have either been made into a regular part of MTV's very good and apparently even financially successful *Liquid TV* anthology series, or run like MTV runs music videos...a three to five minute installment showing up a few times daily. The latter approach would only work if those three to five minute installments were aired on a regular basis, so that one could set ones VCR to catch them. Either approach would be better than what exists now.

Such a setup could free Antonucci and Grimshaw up to really concentrate on what's important in a cartoon: good, taut storylines and good drawn acting executed in a competent way. They have the ability and potential to make this work. Attempting to shove *TBG* into the proven mold of *B&B* will only serve to thwart any potential the show might have. And I can see potential here. Anyone who can see humor in Mexican-style wrestling, cop shows and martini-swilling monks can't be all bad.
Michelle Klein-Häss

My Neighbor Totoro
Fox Video; #4276
87 minutes

At long last, this Hayao Miyazaki production has come to the video market legally. One of several Japanese animated productions which have been staples of the bootleggers' tables at conventions, *Totoro* is finally being seen in a gorgeous video presentation. The transfer preserves Miyazaki's photorealistic backgrounds and intricate colors.

For those animation fans who are used to



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anime, *Totoro* will be a bit of a shock. Just because it's Japanese, don't expect to see any outer space princesses, nudity and gore. Also, unlike anime, which is often very plot-heavy, *Totoro* is a movie which the viewer slowly, but surely into a story that has genuine sentiment. This is not a movie with a plot that can be summed up in a few sentences, nor is it a manipulative tear-jerker.

Totoro tell the story of a university professor who moves his two young daughters to a house in rural Japan. His wife is ill, and staying in a hospital. While some of the children in the area say their house is haunted, the sisters see their new home as a place of magic; some "real," like the soot spirits, and some imagined.

The magic intensifies when the youngest girl discovers the Totoros, mystical cat-like creatures who live in the woods near their home. Only children can see them (and then, only some children).

Now if this was an American film, there would have to be a big conflict and resolution, and undoubtedly, the screenwriters would tie the Totoros into healing the sick mother. Well, thankfully Miyazaki isn't interested in telling that kind of story. This film has a wonderful open-ended air about it, and it that makes you feel that you've heard one story from someone's childhood and you expect to hear another in the future.

The animation, though more limited in technique than current Disney theatrical animation, is still quite good, and is superior to most of the anime animation I've seen. **GMD**

The Mask

The last time a cartoon fan turned up in a Hollywood film (the Segal vehicle *Under Seige*), it was a crazed terrorist with plans to nuke Hawaii. This time the fan's the hero, but no less crazy for that. Jim Carrey, star of the love-it-or-loathe-it *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, plays Stanley Ipkiss, a geekish bank-clerk who gets all of life's hard knocks. Discovering an ancient mask floating in the river, Stan is foolish enough to put it on and WHAMMO! - he turns into a comic-book superhero on acid, complete with green skull-face and Broadway-standard choreography. Empowered with this new persona, Stan is enabled to take revenge on his past tormentors, win the girl of his dreams and save the entire city from the forces of evil

The animated origins of *The Mask* are nothing if not clearly signposted. In an early scene, Carrey watches Avery's lewd classic *Red Hot Riding Hood*; later on in a nightclub he mimics the wolf's lustful reactions to a sultry nightclub singer (including transforming into a wolf himself!), courtesy of the latest computer technology. He also creates Tasmanian Devil whirlwinds, does bad star impressions a la Bugs Bunny, and seduces unwilling victims in the style of Pepe Le Pew (though the things Carrey says are much ruder!). Much of the time Carrey doesn't need any help to give the impression of a living cartoon character: with his rubber face and eternal grin, he qualifies as a special effect himself. The Mask is not an exactly original creation - there are shades of Beetlejuice, the Joker, the Judge 'toon from *Roger Rabbit* and even Freddy Krueger - but Carrey's boundless energy and repetoire of sight-gags carry the film without any problem.

Not that the special effects aren't impressive: the computer animation lets Carrey do anything a toon can do: pop eyes (and face), bend like rubber, flatten out and bounce like a jack-in-the-box, to name but a few of his party tricks. In the end, it will be the effects that people go to see, but rest assured the rest of the film is well up to scratch. The villains are as hissable as you'd expect, the femme fatale is suitably ambiguous, and the cops are comfortably incompetent (especially when the Mask gets them dancing a conga!) Unlike most manic comedies it's actually got a workable story and - gasp! - among the grossness there's an uplifting moral. (Not a particularly profound moral, admittedly - just think masks - but a nice thought all the same.) My only quibble is that, with its gangsters plot and noir atmosphere, it should have a Thirties setting: it's somehow disorientating to see modern technology impinge on the world of the Mask.

As well as the 'toon references, look out for homages to other fantasy works - most obviously Jekyll and Hyde, but also films like *Batman, Dick Tracy* and *Addams Family Values*. And keep an eye out for Carrey's dog - it's an exceptionally good actor, and its last scene is a howl.

Now, if only Carrey had been available for *The Flintstones*..... **Andrew Osmond**

Speed Racer: The Movie

Live Home Video #LD27505, CLV, 2 sides, Closed-Captioned, $34.95, 79m 16s.
Also available on VHS, Live/Family Home Entertainment #27505, $19.95.

This Jerry Beck-programmed anthology culls two complete stories from the mid-Sixties *Speed Racer* series, supplemented with four vintage animated TV commercials, and a rarely seen five-minute *Colonel Bleep* adventure from 1956.

The lean, design-oriented animation style pioneered by Osamu Tezuka (*Astroboy, Kimba the White Lion*) excels in the evocation of linear motion and acceleration, and it's evident that Tatsuo Yoshida developed *Speed Racer* (originally titled *Mach-A-Go-Go*) with the nascent anime genre's foremost strength in mind. The 22-minute "The Car Hater" is a convincingly-motivated tale of Speed and Trixie's encounter with an aspiring female racer and her abusive father, who rides a horse and harbors a pathological aversion to motor vehicles. Supercool mystery man/Racer family prodigal son Racer X turns up periodically to set everything straight in "The Mammoth Car," which is essentially a 43-minute chase sequence (albeit a skillfully paced one). Appearances by the insufferable Spridle and his dress-alike simian sidekick Chim-Chim are mercifully brief.

As engaging as this look back at Speed Racer is, it can't compare to the wonder of witnessing the late Jack Shleh's Colonel Bleep in action. Splashy, abstract backgrounds, Clip Art-influenced character designs, scads of pixie-dust scintillations, an almost psychotically cheerful tone, and the use of held drawings as the cinematic equivalent of exclamation points all reveal Jack Shleh as *Ren and Stimpy* creator John Kricfalusi's unsung artistic mentor.

The *Speed Racer* and *Colonel Bleep* sources materials are of impeccable quality (with the exception of the quaint *Speed Racer* end-title sequence, which looks like 16mm), and the laserdisc transfer is reasonably free from break-up in the saturated reds, and in the color gradations common to cartoon skyline paintings. Alas, no production dates for the *Speed Racer* episodes are given, and the omission of chapter stops is a real pain, especially if you want to cut straight to *Colonel Bleep*, or the high-kitch TV ads.

This disc's lack of basic documentation and chapter stops denote a target audience of casual viewers, rather than epicurean animation fans. Nonetheless, the inspired selection of extras yields a pleasantly diverting program, if less than an essential addition to the laserphile/anime collector's library. For insatiable Speedfreaks, Live Home Video has released two 100-minute Speed Racer laserdiscs, *Race Against Time/The Fastest Car on Earth* and *The Great Plan/The Secret Engine*. **Michael Draine**

Boop Oop A Doop

74 Minutes $29.95
Ivy Classics Video

While this cartoon compilation is certainly not a documentary in the same sense as Leonard Maltin's wonderful look at the Fleischer Studios, it never-the-less is an entertaining look at the Fleischer's cartoon heroine.

Narrated in a straight-forward fashion by Steve Allen, the tape opens with Allen standing in front of 1600 Broadway in New York, the building which was the Fleischers' home during most of the Thirties. It then traces the development of Betty from both a supporting character to a star and from a dog to a human being. The production also points out how the Fleischers used contemporary jazz and pop stars such as Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway to great advantage in many of their shorts.

Many of the classic early Boop cartoon are shown in their entirety, and the print quality is quite good. The tape characterizes some of the cartoons as being "tinted," but as far as I can tell the only shade used is sepia.

The narration touches on who the Fleischers were, the debut of Popeye the Sailor in a Betty Boop cartoon and other aspects of the Boopster's career, but goes into more depth on Betty's sexuality. At one point, there are two single frames in which the film asserts Betty's genitalia was portrayed. I have to admit being a little doubtful of this myself, as what is being discussed is a single and short pen stroke. Frankly, the segment seemed to be attempting to cash in on the *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* controversy, but thankfully, the production does not dwell on this "revelation." **GMD**

Thumbelina

Warner Home Video

Well, no one could accuse Bluth of not going his own way. After an almost universally negative reaction to *All Dogs Go to Heaven* and *Rock-a-Doodle* one might have expected him to rethink his strategy a little, but such is not the case. *Thumbelina* is simply more of the same, with even less style and invention than before. Bluth ostensibly broke away from Disney because of "disillusionment" with the studio's Seventies output; these days it seems little to choose between his work and mediocrities like *Pete's Dragon* and *Robin Hood.*

Thumbelina, loosely based on the classic fairy-tale, concerns the adventures of a miniscule woman born of a flower. At the beginning of the film, she lives an idyllic life on her adopted mother's farm, adored by all around her, her only wish to seek out others of her kind. Her dream comes true when she meets Cornelius, handsome prince of the fairies; predictably, it's love at first sight for both parties. However, no sooner have they met than Thumbelina is kidnapped by a trio of Spanish singing toads (??) who wants her to join their troupe. For the rest of the film, Thumbelina strives to get home, aided by a cheerful swallow and woodland sprites, and hindered by her toad suitor, selfish beetles and a miserly mole.

In an interview some years ago, Bluth claimed he wanted to tell "a new kind of fairy tale," outside the Disney tradition. In the past he succeeded: *Secret of NIMH* and *American Tail* boast strong and original plots, even if the detailed storytelling can be a little ropey at times. *The Land Before Time*, though more banal, features attractive characterisation, and even *All Dogs Go to Heaven* has a neat supernatural spin. Since then, however, Bluth seems to have lost his touch. *Rock-a-Doodle* is a confused mess of oddball sub-plots, oddball characters and Elvis jokes: *Thumbelina* is equally confused, but lacks even the throughgoing weirdness that made *Rock-a-Doodle* slightly distinctive. Instead, it feels like a purposeless Disney rehash, with a chronically saccharine *Silly Symphony* opening, season-changing fairies straight out of *Fantasia*, and a leading number ("Let Me Be Your Wings") that feels suspiciously reminiscent of *Aladdin*'s "Whole New World."

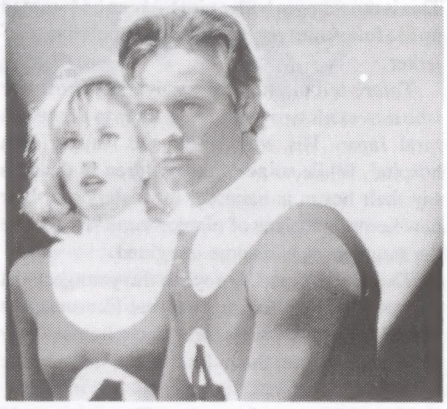
None of this would matter much if the story was well told, or the characters engaged the audience's sympathies. But the story, as in other Bluth films, is allowed to meander vaguely between set-pieces, giving little indication of where it's headed next. Plot holes are legion: how come the fairies control Autumn, but are unable to hold back Winter? How come the toads find Thumbelina beautiful and the beetles think her ugly? We never find out... Of the characters, Thumbelina, voiced by Jodi Benson (*Little Mermaid, Pirates of Dark Water*), is supposedly at the center of things, constantly invited to choose her own path in life: however, she ends up no more rounded than Snow White, never questioning her "true love" for Cornelius. Cornelius himself is heroic but colourless, Thumbelina's mum is quickly forgotten, and all the woodland sprites have to do is look and sound cute. The musical swallow (a copy of the one in *American Tail*) has a whole bookfull of trite sayings, and proves an annoying distraction - even Thumbelina loses patience with him at the end. Of the baddies, only the angular Mr. Beetle stands out, thanks to an energetic performance from Gilbert Gottfried - and even his stock improvisations have lost something since *Aladdin*. In fact, neither Benson nor Gottfried manage to produce anything more than clones of their Disney characterisations.

Stylistically, *Thumbelina* is nothing special. The numerous songs are unhummable, unmemorable, and (apart from the "Let Me Be Your Wings" number) visually uninspiring. (Hint to film makers: Long close-ups of an animated singer are not a way to engage audience interest). The animation is more garish than usual, particular in the character design, though the pictures are often pretty. A few seconds of computer animation are used to heighten a spurious prologue in Paris, but it feels like last-minute garnish, like the cityscape in *Mask of the Phantasm.* (Computer animation is also visible in the setting of the toads' barge.)

In the final analysis, *Thumbelina* remains a watchable film - barely - and may manage to cater for a young audience. (That said, reports suggest even the under-fives are finding its ninety minutes hard going.) On its own terms, indeed, it is not an especially bad film. But after Bluth's intermittently excellent pictures of the early Eighties, and the extensive studio hype given this one, it can only be rated one way - as a crushing disappointment. **Andrew Osmond**

The Fantastic Four

With its reliance on computer animated special effects, *The Fantastic Four* deserves a mention here in **ANIMATO!** While **ANIMATO!** does not encourage or condone video piracy, I have to admit that when a friend lent me a copy of the



Alex Hyde-White and Virginia Staab from The Fantastic Four

film, curiosity got the better of me.

This is the shelved Roger Corman co-production which supposedly will never receive any sort of official release as Stephen Speilberg has bought the rights to the comic book characters for his own version. Along with *Carnosaur*, *The Fantastic Four* marked a new era with Corman producing more expensive films which would have limited theatrical releases and wide video releases. Well, Corman and company are having the last laugh, as a bootleg tape of this film is readily available at comic book conventions. Fans will get so see the movie, although under less-than-ideal circumstances.

It's a shame, too, to see this film in the format of an umpteenth generation dub as it's perhaps the most successful production to date in translating Marvel Comic characters to the screen. Unlike the genuinely awful Captain America movie, this film actually to stay largely faithful to the origin story of the FF, and attempts within its limited budget to bring the fantasy and science elements of the comic book to life.

The film sets up the origin of the FF and its chief nemesis, Dr. Doom. While there are very effective moments, including the friendship of Reed Richards and Ben Grimm, and a touching earnestness with the tentative romance between Reed and Sue Storm, the film's story has just too many holes. The script relies too heavily on the assumed knowledge of the audience. For instance: how does Reed Richards finance his rocket experiments? How does Alicia Masters fall in love with Ben Grimm? How did the FF get back to the United States from Dr. Doom's castle? What country is Dr. Doom leading? When is this film set? Why don't their costumes tear up or

catch on flame? These are questions that are never answered by the film

Also, the sub-plot involving the secondary villain, The Jeweler, is never really explained properly. Who is this guy? If he's so busy successfully robbing jewels, why does he live in squalor? The tone of the film of the film reminds me somewhat of the *Superman* movies. At times, it's sincere, but also there are comic relief moments which seem sort of out-of-place.

On the plus side, the film has a good look in costume, set, and make-up design, and has a very able cast. Ask any actor who's ever been in tights just how difficult it is to avoid looking ridiculous when bounding around a set being heroic. Fortunately, Alex Hyde-White as Reed Richards pulls it off well, as does the rest of the cast.

The special effects are...well...sorta of cheap looking. The Thing suit is on-the-money, and the Invisible Girl gets invisible well-enough, but Mr. Fantastic, well, there's a big problem. What was required was a complex morphing effect a la *Terminator Two*. Unfortunately, the production had to use various prosthesis effects which look hokey, and a couple of instances of computer animation., which look acceptable on this blurry dub. How they would have looked on the big screen is a guess.

The Human Torch's big moment when he "flames on" entirely, and flies is handled completely with computer animation which had a similar character design to that of *Lawnmower Man*. The effect just doesn't look real enough. The scenes in which Johnny flames on just his arm to shoot fireballs are much better.

I had the chance of talking with Alex Hyde-White at the Video Software Distributors Association show in July, and he expressed regret that the film will not, in the immediate future, see release. He believed the production team had done the best job they could have with the budget they had, and that the film could have "had a chance at some of the *Ace Ventura* money." In other words, that the target audience for the film (young teenagers, families),would have been the same. The film would have been undoubtedly rated PG-13. **GMD**

Dinosaur Island
New Horizon Home Video

As long as *The Fantastic Four* gets a mention in **ANIMATO!** for it use of computer animation, I'd be remiss in not pointing out that low-budget old-fashioned stop-motion animation is alive and well in this direct-to-video release.

An affectionate send-up of those Fifties exploitation science fiction films with guys getting marooned on lost islands inhabited by gorgeous cave women and extinct beasts, *Dinosaur Island* utilizes the dinosaur effects from *Carnosaur*; a man-in-a suit rig, a life-size prop dino and puppets. Unlike *Carnosaur*, though, there's several scenes with effective stop-motion work. The film has an effective cast including the lovely and talented Michelle Bauer.

Dinosaur Island is perhaps the best film either Fred Olen Ray and Jim Wynorski have made (the veteran film makers teamed up as co-producer and director on this production), and is an absolute perfect guilty pleasure for anyone who loves cheesey drive-in style movies and beautiful women. **GMD**

The Library of Congress Video Collection Volume Three: Origins of American Animation
ISBN 1-56098-479-1
84 minutes

This collection of 21 complete films (and two fragments) is a serious examination of the beginnings of animation in this country. Beginning with J. Stuart Blackton's *The Enchanted Drawing* (1900) and ending with *Tony Sarg's Almanac: The First Circus* (1921). This collection affords the serious animation fan the opportunity of seeing some of the early productions one has read about for years.

Here are examples of Earl Hurd Bobby Bumps series, the Hearst/ International Film Service adaptations of King Features comic strips, noted live-action director Gregory LaCava animation work, and stop-motion work by Willis O'Brien. There are completely obscure films such as Howard Moss' *Mary and Gretel*, which evidently was part of stop-motion series from 1917. The tape comes with an informative booklet about the collection.

Those viewers who are expecting laughs will be sorely disappointed by this collection. The humor and animation in many of these films is indeed crude and predictable. If you watch this tape hoping to learn about how animation developed in this country, you will enjoy it.

I suppose my only real complaint is that some of the selections border on being animation esoterica, and I think the early work of people such as Paul Terry and Max Fleischer should have been included.

The print quality is uniformly good, and the transfer is excellent, although I would have preferred seeing the image window-boxed. This collection is a solid addition to any serious animation collection. **GMD**

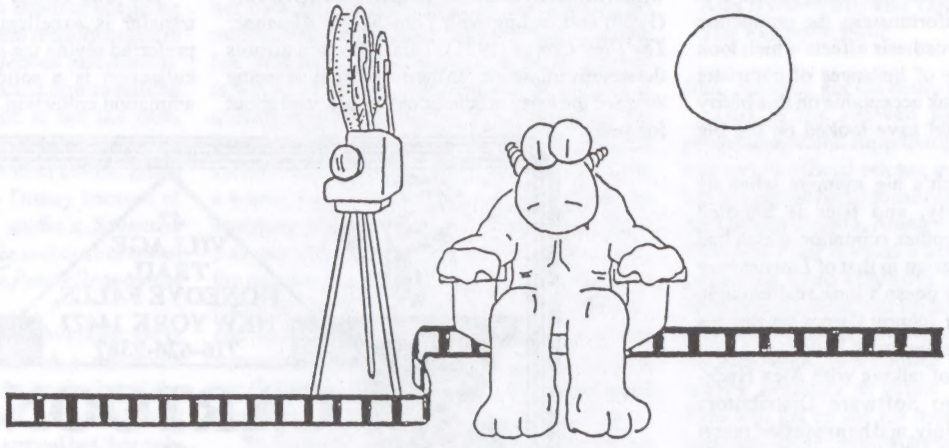


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The Lion King and Kimba

The Lion King may become the Disney Studio's most profitable animated film, but it will certainly be its most controversial. The questions over racist images in *Fantasia*, *Song of the South*, and *Aladdin* have not received as much attention as the numerous similarities between *The Lion King* and the Japanese series known in the United States as *Kimba the White Lion*.

The Disney stand on the issue has been short and sweet; none of the production staff involved with *The Lion King* had ever heard or *Kimba*. Since the Japanese side has not been covered as thoroughly as it should, **ANIMATO!** is printing the following press releases from Mr. Takayuki Matsutani, the President of Tezuka Productions in their entirity.

This fax/letter was translated by Frederik L. Schodt on July 12, 1994, after a conversation with Takayuke Matsutani, the President of Tezuka Productions. In the conversation, he further clarified some points made in the original fax, and these clarifications were incorporated into the translation. Frederik L. Schodt is the author of the acclaimed book Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics.

"The following comments were made in the context of a reply from Mr. Takayuki Matsutani, the President of Tezuka Productions, to inquiries by Charles Burress of the San Francisco Chronicle and others on the resemblance between Disney's *The Lion King* and Tezuka's *Kimba the White Lion*.

'Many people have expressed the same doubts as you have about *The Lion King* and *Kimba the White Lion*. In the animation industry in Japan, there has also been much discussion about the resemblance between the two films, and we ourselves have received many inquiries.

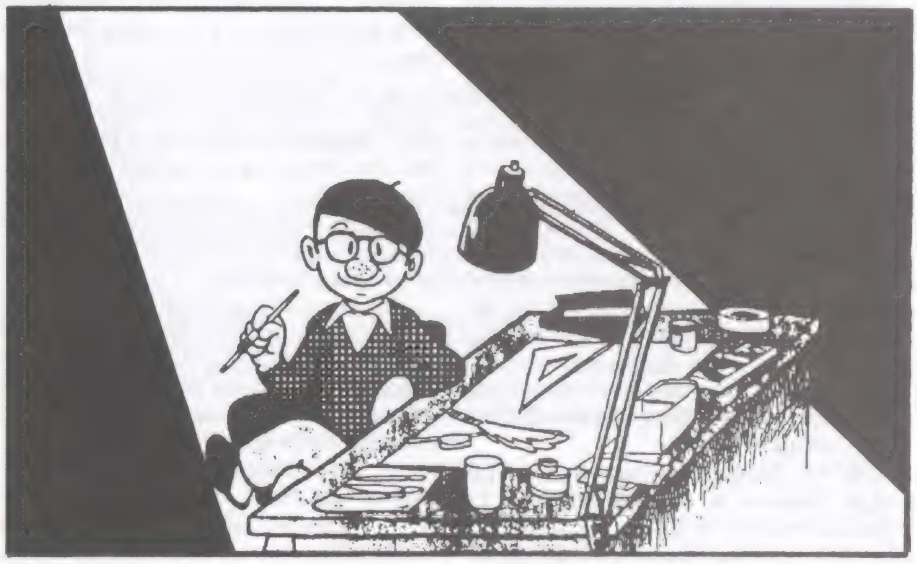
Before addressing your comments, however, let me first provide a little background on *Kimba the White Lion*.,*Jungle Emperor*, as the story is known in Japan, was first scripted and drawn by the founder of our company, Dr. Osamu Tezuka, as a comic book. Serialized from 1950 to 1954 in the magazine, *Manga Shonen* (Young Boys' Comic), it was a novelistic tale over 500 hundred pages in length, and it still enjoys great popularity in paperback form. In 1965, Dr. Tezuka produced an animated series of the same name for television, using the same basic characters and developing the same basic story in 30 minute episodes. In Japan, this series was broadcast on Fuji Television. In the United States, the English version of the same series was broadcast on NBC under the title with which Americans are most familiar: *Kimba the White Lion*.

There are some rather striking similarities between *The Lion King* and *Kimba the White Lion*. In *The Lion King*, as in *Kimba*, a magnificent lion—the ruler of the jungle—dies. His young son, Simba (Kimba in Tezuka's version), then grws up and eventually assumes his rightful place in the animal kingdom. In *The Lion King* there is a scene similar to the opening scene of the *Kimba* TV series, showing Simba perched majestically on an outcropping of rock. And there is also scene where young Simba sees the image of his departed father materialize in the clouds—a scene nearly identical to one in the original comicbook version of Dr. Tezuka's story.

We also see some strong resemblances in several character designs. To name a few examples, in *The Lion King* the wise old baboon, Rafiki, resembles the baboon named "Mandi" in the Japanese language version of Dr. Tezuka's story; the talkative horn-billed bird character resembles "koko" the parrot; the evil lion character, "Scar," closely resembles "Bubu" (who has a scar on his left eye); the hyenas aiding Scar in *The Lion King* closely resemble Bubu's smart-aleck hyena henchmen in Dr. Tezuka's story.

Many of our staff members watched screenings of *The Lion King* and afterwards discussed the film and its similarity to Dr. Tezuka's work. We came to the conclusion that were one to create a story using animal characters set in Africa, with personality types similar to those used in *Kimba*, that a certain overlap in the portrayal of those animals would be inevitable.

If *The Lion King* has been inspired by Tezuka's *Kimba the White Lion*, we believe that the late Dr. Tezuka—the founder and owner of our



The late Dr. Tezuka in a self-caricature

screenings of *The Lion King* and afterwards discussed the film and its similarity to Dr. Tezuka's work. We came to the conclusion that were one to create a story using animal characters set in Africa, with personality types similar to those used in *Kimba*, that a certain overlap in the portrayal of those animals would be inevitable.

If *The Lion King* has been inspired by Tezuka's *Kimba the White Lion*, we believe that the late Dr. Tezuka—the founder and owner of our company—would probably have been pleased. If Dr. Tezuka's works have been used as a reference, we do not feel the need to lodge a protest. Rather, we feel flattered.

Our collective opinion is that *The Lion King* is a completely different work from *Kimba the White Lion*. It is, moreover, an original work, made with the superb production skills that Disney has continued to exhibit over the years."

The following fax/letter was translated by Frederik L. Schodt on August 23, 1994, after a conversation with Takayuki Matsutani, the President of Tezuka Productions. In the conversation, he further clarified some points made in the original fax, and these clarifications were incorporated into the translation.

"In the last month a great deal of controversy has occurred in both Japan and the United States over resemblances between The Walt Disney Company's animated work, *The Lion King*, and Osamu Tezuka's *The Jungle Emperor*, or *Kimba, the White Lion*, as it is known in the United States. Allow me to clarify and comment upon Tezuka Productions' position vis a vis the controversy.

First, let me once more provide some background information.

The Jungle Emperor was originally an epic "manga," or comic book series over 500 pages long. It was created by Dr. Osamu Tezuka and serialized between 1950 and 1954 in the pages of the monthly magazine, *Manga Shonen*.

Dr. Tezuka believed the natural world is eternal, that "living things are born and die, and life is repeated generation after generation, but that nature itself exists fundamentally unchanging." *The Jungle Emperor* reflects this belief. It is a romantic and humanistic story he created as an expression of his hope that man and animals, and nature, could coexist in a positive, symbiotic relationship. It is a story of three generations of lions, centered around Leo, the "White Lion" and the "King of the Jungle," his father, and his children.

In 1965, Mushi Productions produced *The Jungle Emperor* as an animated series for television, basing it on the original comic book story. This series was translated, and an English-language version titled *Kimba, the White Lion* was created that was broadcast not only in the United States, but in several nations around the world.

The similarities between *The Lion King* and both the comic book and animated versions of *The Jungle Emperor* are as follows:

[Items 1-4 apply to both the animated version of *The Jungle Emperor* and the original comic book story]

1. Both are structured around the basic idea of the death of the king of the jungle, the maturing of his son, and the son's eventually assuming his rightful place as the leader of his kingdom.
2. Both have evil-lions that appear as enemies of the hero, with scars over one eye.
3. Both have friendly birds that are always trying to serve the hero lion and help him. (In the comic book version of *The Jungle Emperor*, the bird is a type of parakeet).
4. The scene of Simba standing proudly on an outcropping of rock, which is used in posters, etc., advertising *The Lion King*, closely resembles the opening scene in *The Jungle Emperor* animation and some scenes in the original comic book.

[Items 4-6 apply to the animated series]

5. In the comic book version of *The Jungle Emperor*, clouds in the sky assume the shape of the Leo (the hero lion). In *The Lion King*, the face of the hero lion's father is shown appearing in the sky.
6. In both *The Jungle Emperor* and *The Lion King*, the evil lion's henchmen are comical hyenas.
7. In both *The Jungle Emperor* and *The Lion King*, the lion kings are served by a type of baboon who is a wise old sage.

When queried by the mass media, Tezuka Productions has generally responded by telephone along the following general lines. Our responses have been incorporated into many articles in considerably abbreviated form.

In all the similarities noted above, it is true that the actual shape and coloring of *The Lion King* characters are different from those used for both *The Jungle Emperor* animation and comic book. Nonetheless, there are enough similarities that we believe the Disney staff who worked on *The Lion King* clearly had *The Jungle Emperor* in mind during production.

Several of our staff members who have seen *The Lion King*, however, believe that although there are certainly many similarities in the roles and relationships of the animals, that when the story and work is taken as a whole the result is nonetheless an original work by Disney.

Dr. Osamu Tezuka's eldest daughter, Rumiko has also seen *The Lion King*, and in interviews with magazines she has noted both the similarities to her father's work and the fact that she believes it can be called an original work. She has also said that were her father still alive today, he would probably feel flattered.

Furthermore, Tezuka Productions has consulted with the late Dr. Tezuka's widow, Etsuko, and his eldest son Makoto, who are both directors of our company. When queried by the mass media, we have noted the points listed above, and we have explained that we have no intention of filing a lawsuit against the Walt Disney Company. We believe that lawsuits contribute neither to culture, nor to mutual understanding among the various people actually involved in production of creative works such as animation.

Some background on Tezuka Productions itself is in order. Tezuka Productions was formed by Dr. Tezuka in 1968, while he was still a director of the firm, Mushi Productions. Dr. Tezuka provided all the funding for Tezuka Productions, and was its owner. Later, in 1971, Dr. Tezuka left Mushi Productions, and from then until he passed away, he used Tezuka Productions as the base for his creative activities. When Dr. Tezuka left Mushi Productions, he gave Mushi Productions the copyrights to all of the animated works that he had created up until that point. Although it sounds complicated, it is important to realize here that the copyrights to the animated films and to the works upon which they are based are separate, and that as the creator he retained the rights to the latter. Moreover, Tezuka Productions and Mushi Productions maintain a close relationship today, and this statement from Tezuka Productions is made after consulting with Mushi Productions.

Although we have generally replied to mass media inquiries as outlined above, a large number of manga artists, centered around Ms. Machiko Satonaka, have signed and sent a protest letter to the Walt Disney Company. We are deeply moved and flattered by the esteem with which they clearly hold our company's founder, and by their obvious love for his works.

At the same time, the controversy over *The Lion King* and *The Jungle Emperor* has again become an issue in the United States, and there appears to be a great deal of speculation about reasons why we seem to be standing idly by. We have also seen comments from the Walt Disney Company's production staff for *The Lion King* to the effect that they had never seen *The Jungle Emperor*, or even that we have made false charges against them.

In this situation, we are forced to reconsider our hands-off position about this issue. Insomuch as we do not want others to speculate about our position, or make false assumptions about it, we will from now on state it more clearly.

Throughout his life, Dr. Osamu Tezuka disliked quarreling and disputes, and this sentiment is today shared by wife and children. Furthermore, as I stated earlier, we at Tezuka Productions do not believe that lawsuits are an appropriate way of resolving disputes of this

decisions about creative work are too important to leave up to either governments or the courts. We therefore have no intention at this time of filing a lawsuit against the Walt Disney Company.

That stated, we are nonetheless always prepared to act resolutely, to protect both the works of Dr. Osamu Tezuka and his honor, whenever we feel that our copyrights have been maliciously violated.

The above summarizes our current position."

ANIMATO! thanks Fred Patten of Streamline Pictures for his help in supplying these releases.

Popeye Fan Club Moves

The Official Popeye Fan Club has moved to Chester, IL , the birthplace and hometown of Popeye creator E. C. Segar. Their new address is 1001 State St., Chester IL, and their phone number is 618-826-4567. If you love Popeye, you've got to be a member of this great club!

Mike Gribble, Producer of Spike and Mike's Festival of Animation, Dies

For the past decade Michael T. Gribble and his business partner Craig "Spike" Decker have been presenting to audiences across the US and Canada the best in contemporary animated shorts. Gribble was the colorful emcee of their program who often wore outrageous clothing and beards dyed purple. He was also well known at major animation festivals around the world as a strong supporter of animation who bought outstanding works for his programs.

Gribble began his career as a producer of animation shows in Riverside, CA in the 1970s. He has previously been promoting films of rock concerts in the Riverside area. In 1978, he formed a partnership with Decker, and named it Mellow Manor Productions after a large house where they and others lived in a frathouse lifestyle. Mike began to travel extensively in search of animated shorts, while Decker ran the day-in and day-out portions of the business.

The Spike and Mike shows differed from other touring packages of animation as they promoted their shows one city at a time. These barnstorming promoters would come into a town, rent a theater, and hand out thousands of flyers with a team of assistants, and Mike often hosted their shows. Before their programs began, they would give their audiences giant beach balls and other inflatables to bounce around the auditorium. They also presented special guests from the animation world whenever possible. Over the years audiences have met voice artist June Foray, Oscar-winning animators Nick Parks, Daniel Greaves, Bill Plympton, and John Lasseter and dozens of other talented people.



A portrait of Mike Gribble by Marv Newland, 1991. From "Marv 1992," a book of drawings by Marv Newland © 1991.

Among Spike and Mike's dubious distinctions was the discover that sick and twisted animation sold lots of tickets. Since there were not too many films available, they hired some of the most off-beat animators around to do commissioned work , including *Frog Baseball* by Mike Judge with Beavis and Butthead.

Gribble died Tuesday August 30 at age 42 of a heart attack caused by his weakened condition from a battle with cancer. It came as a surprise to all as he was in good spirits, and was looking forward to trips to Portland and Ottawa in the upcoming weeks. He is survived by his parents Don and Margaret Gribble of San Diego, CA and his brother Don of San Francisco, CA. Spike will continue to present the Festival of Animation and the Sick and Twisted festival, but things will never be quite the same. The world of animation has lost a very special person.

A Mike Gribble Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established. Donation can be sent to Mellow Manor, 7488 La Jolla Bvld., La Jolla , CA 92037. **Karl Cohen**

CLASSIC ANIMATO!

Did you miss out on these great issues of *Animato!* when they were first published? They've been out of print for years (and are no longer available from Animato), but I'm now offering a very limited supply of copies from my files. Each issue is jam-packed with the interviews, criticism, artwork, and other features that make *Animato!* the **Animation Fan's Magazine**.

Issue 16 (Spring 1988): Kricfalusi's Origins! Before there was *Ren and Stimpy*, there was *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*. This issue -- *Animato!'s* last digest-sized one -- features a nine-page John Kricfalusi interview, rare art, and an original John K. cover. Plus: Hanna-Barbara history, Fleischer's Superman cartoons and a Fleischer museum exhibit, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, reviews, and more! *$7.00 postpaid.*

Issue 18 (Spring 1989): Warner Wackiness! A rare and enlightening eight-page interview with Friz Freleng by Jerry Beck highlights a special Warner Bros. issue. Plus: Warner book and video reviews, Disney's *Oliver & Company*, reviews, news, trivia, and more stuff! *$7.00 postpaid.*

Issue 19 (Winter 1990): Computer Animation Magic! A definitive interview/ filmography on the work of John Lasseter, creator of *Luxo Jr., Knickknack*, and *Tin Toy*. Also: Warner's Virgil Ross on his career and work, an exhaustive look at Disney's Florida studio, Fleischer's Gulliver's Travels, and tons of news and reviews! *$6.00 postpaid.*

Issue 20 (Summer 1990): Bugs Bunny Bonanza! A celebration of Bugs Bunny's fiftieth birthday, including interviews, criticism, and rare art is spotlighted in this issue, which also includes a look at Roger Rabbit's surprising roots, a great illustrated interview with Disney veteran Bill Justice, a look at *Robotech* with Carl Macek, an essay on Disney's *Pinocchio*, interviews with Bill Scott and Pete Alvarado, and the usual melange of reviews and other tidbits! *$6.00 postpaid.*

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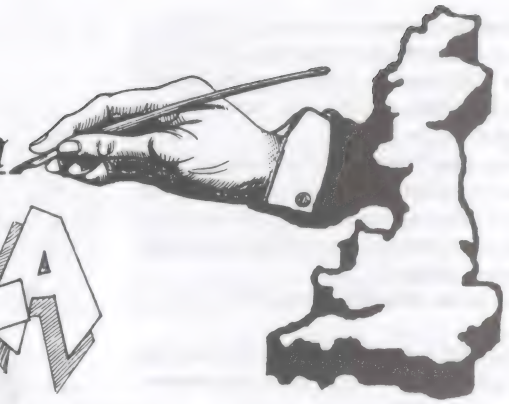
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A Report From Great Britain



TOONS 'N' TEA

by Andrew Osmond

Fans of Aardman Animation were treated to a big-screen re-release of the studio's work under the title *The Aardman Collection*. The package included *The Wrong Trousers* (unsurprisingly!), *A Grand Day Out, Creature Comforts* and the MTV *Sledgehammer*. Also included was a short called Adam, a kind of plasticine *Duck Amuck*, in which a naked humanoid is tormented by a godlike artist.

Popular columnist Gilbert Adair recently wrote a piece on the appeal of Aardman's creations, claiming that unlike many cartoon characters, they have a certain realism - they're tied down to visible physical laws like the rest of us. I dunno, I thought it was just that they looked so funny....

More on Aardman Animations: they've been busy making a series of commercials for British Electricity. In the style of *Creature Comforts*, the adverts take "Vox Pop" soundbites from members of the public and put them in the mouths of various anthropomorphic creatures, ranging from tortoises to penguins. (The slogan, predictably enough, is "Heat Electric: For all your Creature Comforts.") The ad campaign has been a great hit with the general public, even spawning its own line of T-shirts. The only sour note was rung by a lunatic town council (I think it was Birmingham) who complained after a commercial was shown featuring animated orang-outans, with, please note, nondescript British accents. The council claimed it was "a grave offence to black communities throughout Britain" and "unsuitable for a multi-cultural society." Yes, that's what they said. Fortunately, the accusation was laughed out of court and forgotten.

Myself, I still have nostalgic memories of an earlier creation of the animators: Morph, the constantly-changing plasticine co-host for the junior art programme "Take Hart." One of the great British kiddie icons (nostalgic sigh)...

Kids' TV: Richard O'Brien, the writer-cum-lyricist-cum-hunchbacked assistant of The Rocky Horror Show, has appeared as the title character in a new serial, The Ink Thief. In it the villains frequently turn themselves into animated characters, though I've no idea why. It's fun, though the animation isn't a patch on Eighties dramas like Box of Delights and Chronicles of Narnia... Another enduringly popular series is ITV's Knightmatmare, a D & D-esque show in which contestants journey through a computer-generated dungeon. A rival "virtual reality" gameshow is due... The tots' show Postman Pat (model animation) is reportedly a big hit in Japan, while another British creation, Rupert Bear, is enjoying a TV revival courtesy of Nelvana, Ellipse and Scottish TV... No less a personage than the Duchess of York has entered the fray with her own character, Budgie, The Little Helicopter. However, attempts to sell this show to the States have been unsuccessful.

On the big screen British vocals continue to be in demand: witness Jeremy Irons' baddie in Lion King and cult comedian Rowan Atkinson (Blackadder, Mr. Bean) as the pompous aide Zazu. Pop star Phil Collins has announced he's to be a bear in a forthcoming cartoon, though he didn't give away the title...

After one of the shortest theatrical runs in film history, *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb* was screened by BBC2. The earlier description of the Bolex Brothers animation as a hybrid between *Pinocchio* and *Eraserhead* proved accurate: the film verges between the extremely cute (particularly the title hero, a minute sprog who mews like a cat) and the extremely gross (the film opens with a fly being squashed in an artificial insemination plant and goes downward from there). Our hero is kidnapped from his loving (albeit gross) family by Men in Dark Coats and forced through a series of inhuman experiments. Escaping with the aid of a lizard-like mutant, he discovers others of his kind..... Expanded from a ten-minute short for BBC2, the film combines live-action, claymation and deliberately jerky Pixillation (even the "real" world looks unreal!). Worth watching for those who appreciate the decidedly weird. The arthouse critics, of course, loved it.

Festivals: The Museum of Photography, Film and TV in Bradford has been running an exhibit of animated goodies called "Animation Plus." Among the items on display were the gorilla and armadillo from Creature Comforts, a model - ahem! - appendage from an AIDS prevention film, cels from Bill Plympton's The Tune, and stills from a charming short called Turd Family Go on Holiday... The National Film Theatre has been running a fantasy-based season called "Fantasm '94. Two 'toons were represented - Batman: Mask of the Phantasm (in probably its only UK cinema screening) and the anime Appleseed. The latter film is scheduled for limited cinema release, but I do wish Manga would treat their productions with some respect. To judge by the dub, they've concluded "adult" cartoons require four-letter expletives whether the script needs them or not. I've a feeling they've lost friends as a result...

Don Bluth has been on the British media-circuit in the run-up to *Thumbelina*, turning up on kids' TV and radio arts programmes. He was given a generally respectful treatment (one presenter called him "the hottest name in cartoons today!?"), but his Irish-made film was another matter. A handful of the reviews were positive, most were lukewarm and a large number slammed it as "dull" and "a pathetic let-down." The kindest comment people made was that the songs were "no worse" than those in *Aladdin*, reflecting the equal British hatred of Rice and Manilow. Despite the promotion, I ended up seeing the film in a near-empty cinema - will *Thumbelina* go the same way as *Rock-a-Doodle*?

The media has also been engaged in covering Marc Eliot's recently published hatchet-job, Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince (reviewed in Issue 27). Some reviewers accepted Eliot's allegations unquestioningly, but the letters page of the "Sunday Times" saw an angry exchange between Eliot and a correspondant who doubts the historian's sources. In a radio interview, Richard Hollis (co-author of *The Disney Studio Story*) also questioned the writer's conspiracy theories and sub-Freudian analysis.

Meanwhile, while we await *Lion King* (released 4th October), Disney has released "Aladdin" on video with much hullaballo, including balloon-launches and gargantuan advertisements. The newly-restored Snow White follows soon. The TV *Aladdin* and *Little Mermaid* have begun airing on Sunday morning TV.

BBC2 screened a half-hour documentary on Anime and Manga in January. The programme was presented by teen idol Jonathan Ross and proved to be surprisingly well made, including a brief cultural history of anime and interviews with feature directors Buichi Tersawara (*Goku Midnight Eye*, among others), Katsuhro Otomo and Hiyao Miyazaki. Miyazaki's contribution was especially welcome: The British media views anime as an intrinsically violent and pornographic genre, largely due to the selection policy of Manga Entertainment Video. British fans also aired their views (though one opinion, that "anime makes any Western animation look like some obscure Czechoslovakian cartoon," struck me as a tad extreme). The extracts featured ranged from *Hello, Spank!* to *Porco Rosso*, most never seen before in the UK.

The following evening, the BBC ran the TV premiere of Otomo's *Akira*, thankfully uncut, boasting subtitles which were an improvement on those in the theatrical run. Critical response was fairly muted: everyone conceded the film looked good, but there was a lot of sniffing about "plot incomprehensibility" (fair enough) and "poor pacing" (never noticed it myself). As with *Aladdin*, the film's teenage leads found little critical favour. "The Independent" newspaper couldn't understand what all the fuss was about, pointing out the subject matter was familiar in films from "Blade Runner" downward: plainly the fact that this was the first cartoon with such themes (from the UK point of view) hadn't registered with the reviewer.

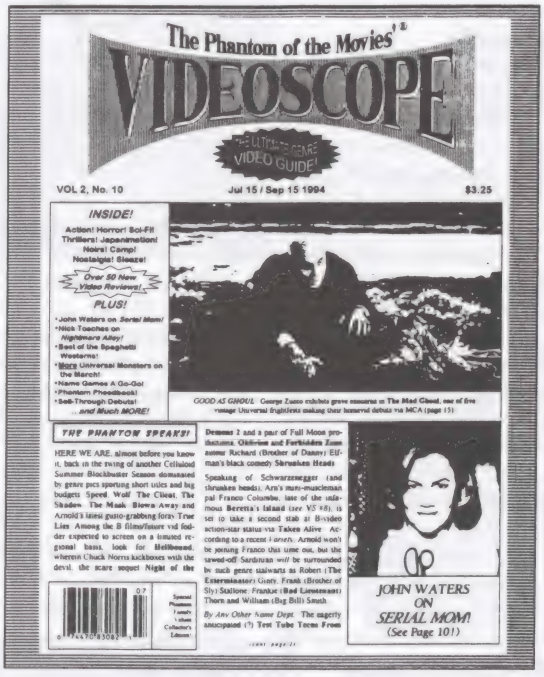
On *Song of the South*: this film has never been villified in Britain as it has in the US. I think it was available on video throughout the mid-eighties, but dropped into obscurity and was subsequently reissued. It was recently shown on ITV on a Sunday afternoon, and attracted little comment. Frankly, the film is so dated it probably only drew a minority audience.

I think there are two factors to bear in mind here. The first is that the film is not - blatantly - racist, at least not in the manner of the "Stepin Fetchit" or "Sambo" vehicles of the same era: the blacks are not portrayed as stupid or evil, though the talk of Remus' "simple" wisdom is decidedly patronising. Johnny is even allowed to have a black playmate, though the latter clearly respects Johnny's higher position and social class. The way in which the film is offensive is extrinsic: it tacitly condones a period in which people were openly discriminated against on the basis of their colour, and twists the facts to show a society in harmony. But few British people have much awareness of American race relations before Martin Luther King, and such distortions are not obvious to a British audience. I only found one contemporary review which even mentioned "negro anger" at the film, though several critics found the depiction of the blacks distasteful.

Second point: British commentators find it difficult to believe that animation, classically a childish and naive medium, could ever be insidious or dangerous, though the publicity over "Manga" movies is changing things. For example, most journalists expressed incredulity that "Aladdin" could be politically incorrect, one calling it a sad indictment of Thought Policing in Hollywood. On another level, the BBC have no qualms in showing shorts like the lewd *Red Hot Riding Hood* in prime-time, wheras I gather the picture is restricted to video in America. Though with the current concern over TV's effect on children, I suppose anything could happen.....

Andrew Osmond is ANIMATO!'s British correspondent.

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CURIOSITY SHOP:

THE LOST BOY: REDISCOVERING SCRAPPY

By Harry McCracken

In 1980, Leonard Maltin called the Van Beuren Studio the least-known of the animation studios of the 1930s — but today that dubious honor more rightly belongs to the Columbia studio. After all, in the years since Maltin's comment, the Van Beuren films have gone from near-total obscurity to being available nearly everywhere for a few dollars, thanks to the pervasive public-domain cartoon tapes that also feature formerly-forgotten cartoons from Fleischer, Famous Studios, and other companies.

You won't find Columbia cartoons on those $2.98 tapes — or almost anywhere else, for that matter. The studio has apparently diligently renewed the copyrights on its animated films, preventing them from lapsing into the public domain. But aside from one botched tape of recolored Li'l Abner cartoons, the Columbia library has received no exposure on videotape or modern-era television.

That makes Scrappy, the small boy who appeared in more than 75 Columbia animated shorts from 1931 through 1941, one of the most forgotten major cartoon characters of the 1930s, along with his fellow Columbia star Krazy Kat. Produced by Charles Mintz after his studio relocated to the west coast, the Scrappy cartoons are amusing, offbeat, and thoroughly worthy of rediscovery.

Dick Huemer, who was responsible for the early Scrappy cartoons along with Sid Marcus and Art Davis, has described the informal process by which these films were produced: each of the three artists would be completely responsible for one-third of the cartoon, devising gags and animating with without consulting much with the other two. Maybe that's why Scrappy, a little kid with an oversized head, never seemed to look quite the same from scene to scene or cartoon to cartoon; his voice also varied remarkably from film to film.

The disorganized approach extended to the cartoons' cast of characters. The primary supporting player was a smaller boy, apparently Scrappy's younger brother; Maltin's Of Mice and Magic says he was known alternately as Oopie or Vonsey, but in the only cartoon I've seen in which he was identified on-screen, it was as "Poopsie." Scrappy had a dog — a terrier named Yippy — but in some cartoons he unaccountably owns a different canine companion. The cast was rounded out by Margie, a little girl whose appears in relatively few shorts.



Scrappy and Yippy! ©Columbia Pictures

Scrappy was superficially one of the legion of Mickey Mouse knockoffs that populated animation in the 1930s, but he's a much more distinctive creation than Warner's Bosko or Columbia's own Krazy Kat (who owed far more to Disney than Herriman). Unlike the incessantly cheery Mickey wannabees, Scrappy is an often sour-tempered fellow with a short fuse. Ostensibly a little boy, he also appears in such adult occupations as pet store owner, South Pole explorer, or Royal Canadian Mountie as each cartoon requires.

He regards Oopie — a much more likable character than his older brother — as a major annoyance, telling him to shut up and/or spanking him in countless scenes. He even slaps him around in *Scrappy's Boy Scouts* (1936), an otherwise wholesome film apparently produced in conjunction with the Boy Scouts of America.

It's unfair to Scrappy to single him out for his unsympathetic behavior, though. In his world, almost everyone seems to take a certain glee in wanton violence, including animals. In *The Pet Shop* (1932), for instance, some monkeys string up Oopie from the ceiling with a length of rope, so that two fish may play tic-tac-toe on his scalp; the winner of each game gets to whack Oopie on the backside with a two-by-four.

Almost without exception, adults in Scrappy cartoons are lazy, untrustworthy types, like the jury members in *The Dog Snatcher* (1931) who wake up long enough to railroad Yippy into the dog pound, then fall asleep again. (That cartoon's most memorable moment, however comes when Scrappy rescues his pal by yanking the skin off of a guard dog and donning it as a disguise!)

The apotheosis of the Scrappy style has to be *The Flop House* (1932), in which our enterprising hero runs a thriving business by providing 25-cent temporary bedding for down-on-their-luck dogs, goats, and kangaroos, not to mention his own kid brother. As usual, several gags involve senseless destruction: When Oopie gargles before going to bed, he casually smashes a window for the sole purpose of spitting his used mouthwash through it. The climactic chase scene comes when Oopie discovers his bed is full of bedbugs (whom are lovingly and repulsively animated), which leads to a riot in which the vagrant animals storm out of the flop house.

Seen today, the Scrappy cartoons can be a lot of fun, but as Maltin points out in Of Mice and Magic, the structure most of these shorts is so hap-hazard that they don't make a lasting impression. In many cases, it's ambitious artwork rather than gags that stick in the mind: *Sassy Cats* (1933) opens with a striking sequence — in which a cat carouses over a series of fences — that uses three-dimensional, moving backgrounds, a rarity in animation until Disney began accomplishing similar effects with computers in the 1980s. Even more memorably, *Scrappy's Art Gallery* (1934) has a nifty scene in which Oopie frolics through slickly animated versions of

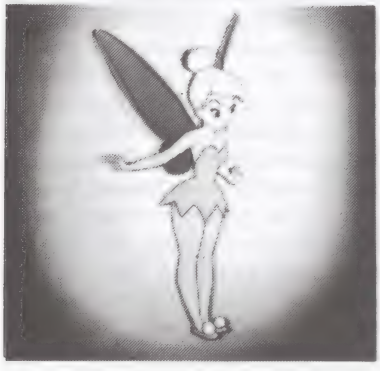
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VINTAGE ANIMATION ART





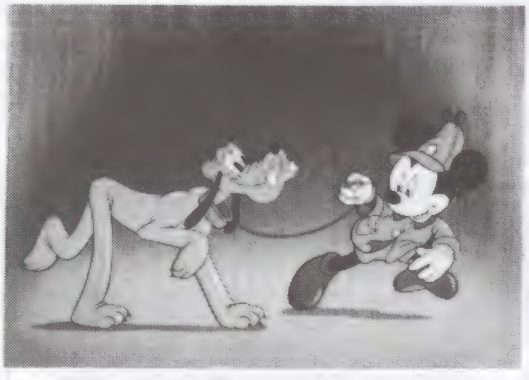


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Animation Preservation Report

By Jere Guldin

When the folks at **ANIMATO!** afforded me the opportunity to pen a column on preserving animated films beginning last issue, I pretty much leaped at the chance. Film preservation is one of my passions, and the best way to ensure that it happens is to get people interested in the subject. The more that persons can read about the reason and the need for preservation, the better educated (and, we hope, supportive) they'll become.

There's so much to let you know about, too. Upcoming columns will address specifically how film preservation takes place: the work entailed, the methods used, and the choices involved. We'll be looking also at the status of animation preservation at the various studios and archives in this country and others. Sometimes the columns will consist of news about ongoing restoration projects or recent archival discoveries. Occasionally, we'll address preservation issues as part of the context of a larger article; for instance, a future column will provide an in-depth look at George Pal's "Puppetoons," the preservation status of which will be explored in a sidebar article. We hope also to have guest columnists take over for me from time to time, affording you a different slant on animation preservation and related activities.

That pretty much lets you in on the focus of upcoming installments of this column: to inform you of the need for preserving animated films, to get you to support the effort, and, with any luck, to enable you to enjoy what you've been reading, as well. Most articles won't be as personalized as is this one; however, since it's already taken such a slant, we'll continue in that vein, letting you in on a recent preservation "find" that I happened upon myself.

As an employee at UCLA Film and Television Archive, I have first-hand knowledge of the complexity of film storage and identification, and the vagaries of it, too. In most instances, archivists have a general knowledge of which items in their collection need preservation. But that's not always the case, and the films that escape their notice usually are more obscure titles, or items that have been mislabeled or misidentified. (The story goes that the Cinematheque Francaise once took ten years to locate the only surviving nitrate print of Lon Chaney's silent feature, The Unknown, due to the overwhelming number of films in its collection listed simply as "unknown.")

Just such an item turned up recently at UCLA. In the Film and Television Archive's collection of nitrate films was a subject listed only as "1946 Community Chest Trailer." Such a generic sort of title isn't all that unusual; there are lots of theater announcements, date strips, advertising, and the like to be found at most larger archives, and generally there is no better way of identifying them than by giving a brief description of their contents. However, UCLA hadn't supplied this title, since the item was in its original can, with applied label from the Technicolor Corporation. When this film, along with numerous others, was being relocated to accommodate the rebuilding of several shelving units damaged during the January earthquake, it suddenly came under closer scrutiny.

The reason for that was all in the label. From the sound of it, "1946 Community Chest Trailer" fits the description of what we refer to today as "public service announcements," or "PSA's." These were shown commonly in theaters in years gone by, usually featuring an actor of some prominence making an onscreen appearance and asking the audience's help in donating to a particular charity. Often these had a story connected with them, making them fit into a theater program more easily by appearing to be one of the short subjects that accompanied features at the time.

But the title wasn't what stirred interest here; it was the three words, "successive exposure master." that followed it on the label. To anyone familiar with how Technicolor films were printed, that's a dead giveaway you're dealing with a cartoon. As you may know, the original Technicolor process utilized three different strips of film upon which were recorded the red, green, and blue records of a scene. This was altered quickly for animated films, so that the record for each color was recorded on a single roll of film, which was referred to as a successive exposure negative. A positive master could be generated from the negative as protection, and that is what UCLA held.

Naturally, my interest was piqued by this discovery, so I took the film to an editing bench and began winding through it in an effort to ascertain exactly what it was, and perhaps find out who had made it. I didn't hold out much hope for success in this area, expecting the subject to have been produced for the Community Chest by some obscure animation company, with no production credits even listed.

But when I had wound down to the first frame of picture, I was surprised by the sight of the "Pluto" title card that headed all of Disney's Pluto cartoons from the 1940's. Following that was the actual title of the piece: *A Feather in His Collar*. Afterward came a simple little story of Pluto getting wise to the needs of the Community Chest, and being given a white feather to wear proudly, showing that he had helped.

My next step was to contact Disney, to check if this might be a title missing from their holdings. More than any other studio that produced animated films, Disney has taken the greatest pains to safequard its product. Yet a small number of items are missing from their holdings, and *A Feather in His Collar* is exactly the kind of subject they'd be less likely still to have. The Disney studio made numerous films of this type, mostly for the government, but also for other sponsors and corporations. The negatives to these generally were not retained by the studio, but were turned over instead to the agency that had commissioned the work. Most of these were lost track of, or discarded, over the years.

So when I called Scott MacQueen at Disney to let him know what I had found, I had barely mentioned the words "Community Chest" when he had already guessed what it was, and was anxious to get hold of it. Scott is the Library Restoration Manager for the company, and is just about the best thing to happen there since the Nine Old Men. Currently, Disney is in the midst of making full preservation of all its holdings, copying those items still existing only on nitrate to safety-based film stock; upgrading quality on titles, as necessary; correcting color from Eastman negatives that have begun to fade; and undertaking full restoration of specific subjects, when required. Scott supervises all of this, and his knowledge and tenacity ensure that the job is done correctly.

Now, Disney already did hold a 35mm Technicolor nitrate print to *A Feather in His Collar*, which was fortunate, because no sound for it was at UCLA, and the track would need to be re-recorded from the print. But Scott was reluctant to copy the picture from that, since Technicolor loses much of its luster when duped to new color negative from a projection print, and this was somewhat worn from past usage, as well. Instead, he put the project on hold and hoped that better materials might turn up—as indeed they did. The successive exposure master will yield a beautiful quality image when preservation is completed.

So Scott asked if *A Feather in His Collar* could be borrowed for this purpose, and UCLA Film and Television Archive approved. Not that the Archive wouldn't have been interested in preserving the film itself, but currently it has more preservation projects going than can be handled, and not nearly enough funding available for all of them. Besides, precedent already had been set several months earlier, when it lent nitrate materials to Disney on another of its cartoons of this nature, *Minnie's Yoo Hoo*. Once

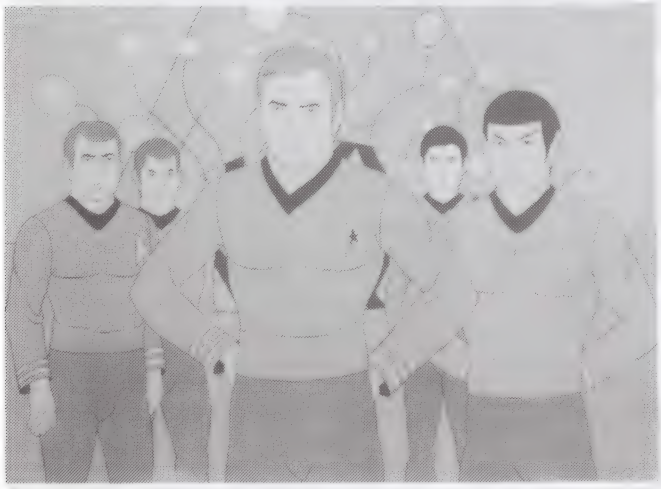
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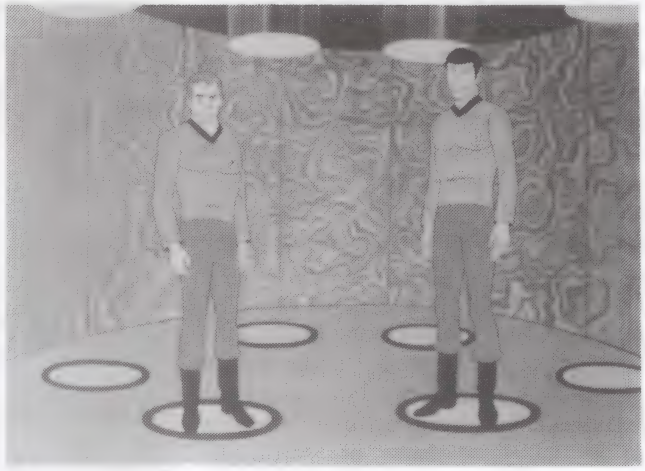
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Faces Behind The Voice: June Foray – The Queen of Cartoons

She's Rocky, Natasha and a champion for animation

by Michelle Klein-Häss

It's very hard not to use superlatives when writing about June Foray.

Long considered the best (and certainly the most visible) voice actress working in animation, she is now acclaimed as the finest living animation voice artist, period. And she is certainly the most recognizable. Just as one would marvel at the many, many voices created by Mel Blanc, and could hear in each characterization his own distinct vocal signature, Ms. Foray's personality shines through in every character she has helped bring to life. From her work at Disney, Warner Bros., Lantz and MGM during the 1950s, to Rocky the Flying Squirrel and Natasha Fatale, to her most recent work, her characters all seem to have a special sparkle, a liveliness that none of her peers can touch.

She lives in a comfortable but modest home in a suburb of Los Angeles with a veritable museum of animation memorabilia and a very friendly canine companion. As well as remaining active in voice-over work, Ms. Foray is also on the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (the folks who give out the Oscar each year) and on the advisory board of the Cartoon Network alongside such luminaries as Bill Hanna, Joe Barbera, Friz Freleng and John Kricfalusi. And as one of the founders of the Hollywood chapter of ASIFA, Ms. Foray has been very active in promoting the present state of the art and the future possibilities of animation.



Photo by Michelle Klein-Häss

Ms. Foray began her long career at the young age of 12, as a radio actress at a local radio station in her birthplace, (and **ANIMATO!** home base) Springfield, Massachusetts. "My dramatic teacher had a radio show, and so I went on it. By the time I was 15 I joined the WBZA Players in Springfield on a regular basis. Acting has been an important part of my life certainly since my school years...I managed to have a part in just about every school play that was put on. I have to hand it to Mrs. Larson...she really taught me a lot about being a professional."

By age 17, Ms. Foray was living in Los Angeles, the west coast hub of the major radio networks as well as the home of the American film and recording industry. She began writing and performing in radio, eventually writing and performing her own children's show, "Lady Makebelieve" at age 19. The Northridge Earthquake uncovered a long-forgotten boxful of "Lady Makebelieve" scripts, and the ever resourceful Ms. Foray decided to make the best of the discovery.

"I'm going to record six cassettes featuring some of the old "Lady Makebelieve" stories for Turner Publishing over the next three years, and they have options on the stories for other media: books, TV, film, animation, the whole spectrum....The character of Lady Makebelieve narrated the stories, and did all the parts in the stories as well. I wrote all the stories myself. I remember it was really well received when I did it for radio originally...the LA City School District actually replayed

the transcriptions in school. The stories were innocent, charming fantasies...I think that's needed in times like these. Yes, older children should know about subjects like crime and AIDS and sexuality, but I think that younger children need some magic back in their lives...they need to have an escape."

Ms. Foray spent her early adulthood working on radio programs like the *Lux Theatre*, *The Danny Thomas Show*, *The Jimmy Durante Show* , and many others, during a time when radio was as ubiquitous in people's lives as TV is now. Then, in the late '40s, she began working in film, both in live action as a voice replacement artist and in the field she loves best: animation voice acting. Her first work in animation was in the strange hybrid live action/animation shorts by Jerry Fairbanks for Paramount, *Speaking of Animals*. Then in 1950, she began work at Disney. Her first work there was doing feline vocal effects as Lucifer the Cat in *Cinderella*.

"I met Stan Freberg and Daws Butler on *Speaking of Animals*. Then, around that time Stan, Daws, Mel Blanc and myself got signed to Capitol Records to do children's records. Remember, this was before Warner Bros. and Disney had their own record labels, so there was no problem having us record for Capitol...I also cut records for RCA as well. The producers at Warner Bros. and Disney heard my work on these records, and they hired me based on that.

From then on, Ms. Foray worked constantly in animation, helping to create such memorable characters as Witch Hazel, and turning previously nondescript characters like Granny in the Tweety and Sylvester series of cartoons into something more fleshed out and alive. Because of this, she became one of Chuck Jones' favorite voice actors, and continues to work with him to this day. She worked at MGM with Tex Avery on two cartoons, most memorably as the female announcer on *Cars Of Tomorrow*. She also voiced characters for Walter Lantz, and not only vocally portrayed the Indian Princess and one of the Mermaids in Disney's *Peter Pan* but also served as the live-action model for the Mermaid that was used as a reference for the animators.

All through this period of work, however, she felt a little slighted because even though her voice was heard, she got no on-screen credit for her work.

"It did rankle a little bit. Mel Blanc was the only one who was getting the onscreen credit, and that was because Warners didn't really pay him what he deserved, and he managed to get the credit as a compromise to keep him from walking out on them. Stan Freberg was not happy about this, and neither was Daws Butler. At least now all of us who did voices on Warners cartoons are getting credit when they air on TV. But I'd like to see the credits added to the shorts on video and when they are shown theatrically."

But all that anonymity changed when she began work in 1958 on *Rocky and His Friends*, where she not only created the voices she is most famous for, Rocky the Flying Squirrel and Natasha Fatale, but was also the voice of most of the female characters in those cartoons. The show was wildly successful, at times controversial in its day, and still has an enduring audience on both cable and broadcast TV.

The track recording sessions for those cartoons were very different from how the major animation studios did it in that rather than having isolated voice actors performing their voices line by line, the track was laid down live, with all the actors in one studio playing off each other.

"[*Rocky and His Friends*] was great all around...the writing, the stories, the satire, the conception, the acting, the direction... it was very intelligent, very sophisticated. We offended sports stars, congressmen...but all the time it was gentle, friendly satire. Nothing cruel. I look at my time there and I can say, with a fair amount of certainty, that this was the zenith, this was the high-water mark of my career. The Warners cartoons were great, too, but the techniques they used for recording voices didn't allow for the interplay between the actors. The rapid delivery was just incredible. It couldn't have been done line by line."

Around 1960, Hanna-Barbera was working on another addition to the animated family show derby that included at that point Bob Clampett's *Beany & Cecil* (as part of the Mattel Toys-sponsored *Matty's Funday Funnies*) and *The Bugs Bunny Show*, both of which were airing in prime time on the ABC TV network. They made a pilot, *The Flagstones*, which led to the series, retitled *The Flintstones* due to conflicts with the comic strip *Hi & Lois*. On this pilot, which recently resurfaced thanks to the diligence of researchers working for Turner, it is Foray, not Bea Benaderet, who is voicing the dishy Mrs. Betty Rubble. Why did Ms. Foray not continue in this role?

"I have no idea. That really disappointed me...I don't think that Hanna-Barbera had anything to do with the decision...as far as I can figure it was a decision from the network brass. When I went in to do the voice, I asked them 'What kind of a voice do you want? Do you want a nagging voice, a sweet voice?' and they replied 'Just do your normal voice.' That's what I did...it was just me. Then, to my shock, they held auditions later for the voice, and they didn't invite me. I can look back at it now without any sort of resentment, but back then I was really mad."

Even after the demise of *Rocky and*



Jacques and Gus are listening for the feline tones of June Foray in this scene from *Cinderella* ©Walt Disney Productions

Bullwinkle, which continued in production until the mid-1960s, Ms. Foray continued to be in demand as a voice actress, lending her vocal talents to not only cartoons, but doing dialogue replacement and looping as well. And in the 1990s, she still is quite active in these areas. She recently recorded tracks for a new Don Bluth movie currently in production, *The Pebble and the Penguin*. (She did the voice of the Queen of the Fairies in Bluth's most recent release, *Thumbelina*.) She is Granny Goodwitch in a continuing series of spots for Post Golden Crisp cereal. And she continues to be a regular vocal performer on Film Roman's *Garfield* series.

How does she come up with a voice for a given character? Sometimes she reaches back into her previous work and does a variation of one of her classic characters. And sometimes the process is one of pure serendipity.

"Sometimes you have to think off the top of your head when you go in to work on a given project. For example, I was working at Hanna-Barbera, on staff as a voice actor, and I went in to work on *The Smurfs*. I assumed they wanted me to do the voice of Smurfette...after all, she was the only female amongst the Smurfs. I instead ended up doing the voice of Jokey Smurf. This was 1980, something like that. Before I went in to record, I looked at all the model sheets for the characters, The director, Gordon Hunt, told me'hey, why don't you try some of the other characters and see what you can do with them.' I simply didn't know any of the others...I was in to read for Smurfette. So I read cold on the others. My background in radio helped me a lot on that. I saw Jokey Smurf, with his 'Hyuk Hyuk Hyuk' dialogue balloon next to him, and improvised a funny laugh. It all fit together. So it turned out that I did Jokey on the show.

"But by that time, going in and reading for a part was something I didn't do much of anymore. And now I don't do that at all. They ask me occasionally to voice test for a job, but I won't anymore. Perhaps I've not gotten as many jobs as I could have, but I've gotten to a point where I would rather do less jobs and not have the stress. I did so many auditions when I was younger. I am still working, I am financially secure...why not let other, newer talents get a chance? When they ask for me to do a voice, they want me...they specifically want a 'June Foray voice.' The producers know the kind of characters I have done in the past, and they also know I can go in and come up with something unusual."

When she is not in the vocal booth, Ms. Foray is active with ASIFA-Hollywood, and is also sort of an ambassador of goodwill for the Hollywood animation community, making public appearances like one she recently did at the Hollywood Bowl as a part of *Bugs Bunny On Broadway II*. And as a member of the AMPAS Board of Governors, she has been passionately involved in promoting awareness of animation in the Academy, and also helped to keep a live-action short subject category in the Academy Awards.

"The reason why the Academy wanted to get rid of live-action shorts was that they thought that there was no audience for them. But then they realized that there were new venues where live-action shorts were being shown...untraditional venues like Imax, Showscan, the new movie rides from Iwerks Entertainment. And the technical propensities of these new short films are nothing short of tremendous!....I didn't do it alone though...my colleagues on the board and also directors like Spielberg, Lucas and Scorcese who started their careers doing shorts helped to convince the Academy that the category should remain."

Her activism in the movie industry is also matched by her activism in political, animal-related and environmental causes. She even managed to get herself on the Nixon Enemies List in 1973 because she helped to organize a national meat boycott.

"The price of meat in '73 was incredibly high...disproportionately high. A friend of mine called me and told me that some women back east were organizing a boycott, and why don't we help? So I called up Michael Jackson, (the LA-based radio talk show host, not the self-proclaimed "King of Pop") and told him what we were going to do. Jackson is pretty omnipotent in LA media even now, and through him we got national media attention, and then things snowballed. We set the boycott for the first week of April, beginning April Fools Day. Hubert Humphrey called me to Washington to testify before Congress.The movement was so successful, even before the boycott day, that the meat producers had to ship cattle down to Argentina to sell them...and that's like shipping coals to Newcastle, you know? My husband and I got calls that would end at about two in the morning and start up again at five. About a week before the boycott, I got a call from Charles Osgood telling me that Nixon was putting a ceiling on meat prices, and asked if the boycott was still on. I said yes, because the ceiling was too high, and furthermore we were not just out to get the price of meat lowered, we were there to make a point. This embarrassed Nixon so much he put me on the enemies list, and as a result my taxes were audited for ten years after that!"

If Tex Avery was the "King of Cartoons," as Joe Adamson described him in the title of his book, then Foray definately deserves the title of Queen of Cartoons. And her reign is likely to continue for a long time to come.

Michelle Klein-Häss is a regular contributor to ANIMATO!.

The Animato! Film Poll Top Ten Results from 1991

Independents

1. The Wizard of Speed and Time
2. The Great Cognito
3. Bambi Meets Godzilla
4. Animato
5. KnickKnack
6. The Big Snit
7. Technological Threat
8. Futuropolis
9. Tin Toy
10. Quasi at the Quackadero

Theatrical

1. Fantasia
2. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
3. Pinocchio
4. Yellow Submarine
5. Who Framed Roger Rabbit
6. The Secret of NIMH
7. Bambi
8. The Little Mermaid
9. Wizards
10. Watership Down

Television

1. Bullwinkle / Rocky and His Friends
2. Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures
3. Dangermouse
4. Jonny Quest
5. George of the Jungle
6. Beany and Cecil
7. The Simpsons
8. The Flintstones
9. The Jetsons (old episodes)
10. Tiny Toon Adventures

Viva Las Vegas!

ANIMATO's intrepid editor journeys to the land of casinos, slots and Wayne Newton to find out what's hot on home video this year

By G. Michael Dobbs

Each year, thousands of video retailers from around North America go to Las Vegas, the site of the VSDA, the Video Software Dealers Association convention. Perhaps the most unreal city in America is the perfect place for four days of concentrated show biz puffery. This year, **ANIMATO!** was part of the press corps to find out what's new on home video and laserdiscs for animation fans, and it was appropriate that the animation fans' magazine was there. The two most anticipated video releases of this year are both animated.

I went out to the convention with a suitcase fully of complimentary copies of the magazine, **ANIMATO!** tee shirts, and flyers. I came back with even more brochures, tee shirts, key chains, posters, and review tapes! It took days just to go through the material I had been given by the hundreds of companies represented at the show, and as a member of the press (we all wore highly visible name tags) I was expected to carry home everything! Luckily for me, a novice to both the VSDA and the city of Las Vegas, I had an expert guide in frequent **ANIMATO!** contributor, Christopher Kindred, who is both a native and resident of Las Vegas.

This convention is *the* trade show for the video industry, and the exhibitors make sure to remind video store owners and their employees that they are indeed part of "show biz." The term "booth" doesn't do justice to the many very highly elaborate exhibit areas which are designed to capture the attention of the attendees.

Was is it corny to have your picture taken with costumed actors posing as Ren and Stimpy or Gumby or the Biker Mice from Mars? How about standing in line for a *Free Willy* beach towel to take home? Or how about snapping up a Ted Danson/ MacCauly Culkin watch? Sure it was, but this kind of old fashioned ballyhoo used to be a key component of the motion picture business, and it was refeshing to allow yourself to be bathed in a show of good clean hype.

The parties reflected the old values of show biz. Republic Home Video staged a mini-rodeo at its luncheon for the video dealers, while Jeffrey Katzenberg, (the former Disney production exec) presided over a Disney luncheon in which *Snow White* was enacted by a troupe of actors and puppets.

The press wasn't invited to a number of these affairs. Personally, I would have loved to have witnessed the attack Katzenberg made on the future video promotion deal McDonald's is planning. Chris and I were admitted to a great party thrown by Roger Corman and New Horizons Home Video trumpeting the release of their new western. I think Roger spent more on the party than he did on many of his movies!

Of course, what really dazzles people was star power itself. If you want to meet celebrities, the VSDA is one place to acquire an instant autograph collection. The various video companies brought the stars of their up-coming releases to the VSDA in order to sign autographs and schmooze with the folks. The idea is, of course, if you actually meet these people, you just might decide to buy a couple more copies of their video for your store.

I've been a journalist since 1975, and have interviewed dozens of show business illuminaries, but the VSDA certainly cracked any world-weary jaded veneer I was wearing. I was constantly in awe of just the sheer number of famous people attending the show. For instance, among the people I got to meet were: the voice of Ren and Stimpy (among others) Billy West; Carmen Diaz, the female star of *The Mask*; Ricki Lake of John Waters' *Serial Mom*; Hollywood legends Tony Curtis, Ann Miller and Cyd Charisse; the voice of the Pink Panther, Matt Frewer; the great character actor Lance Henriksen; Leslie Neilsen; adult film



Venerable editor meets big-time animation stars.



Faithful Las Vegas guide and ANIMATO! contributor Chris Kindred is seen here with the Warners.

star legend Marilyn Chambers; Fred "The Hammer" Williamson; direct-to-video diva Shannon Whirry; Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera; one of my favorite low-budget stars, Michelle Bauer; black film-maker and comic Rudy Ray Moore; character great Don Stroud; star of the shelved *Fantastic Four* film Alex Hyde-White; movie historian Leonard Maltin; and "Larry 'Bud' Melman" himself, Calvert De Forrest.

To drop a few more names, here's some of the people I saw, but did not get to meet: Debbie Reynolds; June Allyson; Chuck Norris; Fabio; Stephen Segal; Jerry Lewis; Shelly Duvall; Jean Stapleton; Angus Scrimm; Luke Perry; Dudley Moore; LaToya Jackson; The Barbi Twins; the Olson Twins; Stephanie Powers; C. Thomas Powell; Dana Plato; Richard Simmons; Deborah Shelton; Cynthia Rothrock; Roger Corman; Stephen Railsback; Dan Haggerty; and Lassie!

The stars with the greatest perceived earning potential for the video industry, though, couldn't attend, because they aren't real... *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. and the dinos of *Jurassic Park*.

MCA/Universal proudly announced at the show that the company was spending $65 million to publicize and market the video release of *Jurassic Park* which has been set for October 4. The film will be offered on video in standard and letterboxed forms with a suggested retail price of $24.98, and in a letterboxed laserdisc for $44.98 and a CAV-Boxed letterboxed disc for $74.98.

VSDA attendees got a chance to see visit Jurassic Park through an elaborate *Jurassic Park* exhibit. The lines were considerable around the bamboo-walled display, but Chris and I persevered. Inside were numerous production sketches, props, and photos, but the star was a life-size Triceratops. By going through the exhibit, each person recived a free *Jurassic Park* gift such as a sweatshirt or baseball hat.

At the Disney booth, *Snow White* was the focus of their marketing efforts. The animated classic will be available on Oct. 28, and will be priced at $26.99 on video and $29.99 on laserdisc. There will be also a limited edition boxed set (100,000 copies made) including the video, a "making of" video and book, and ten lithographs of original posters, and a CAV laserdisc release at $99.99.

Disney is also releasing *The Nightmare Before Christmas* this fall at the price of $19.99 for video, with apparently no laserdisc release set at this time. Jack Skellington was in attendance in the form of a 30 foot tall balloon sculpture.

Riding on the wave of Disney's *The Lion King* is the release of *Leo the Lion: King of the Jungle* by Palm Beach Entertainment. This is the follow-up series to the venerated Japanese series Kimba the White Lion. The 25-minute tapes (recorded in Standard Play speed) will retail at $6.95. There are eight volumes planned at this time. (See review this issue.)

Animation patriarchs William Hanna and Joseph Barbera were mobbed by fans at their autograph session at the Turner Home Video area. During a brief lunch break, I got the chance to speak with both as they munched on sandwiches.

Both men were happy to have participated in the Hanna-Barbera Shorts Program. Each had a chance to direct their own short, which marked the first time since 1940 that either man directed a cartoon without the other!

Barbera made the remark, though, that he "prefered the way we did them," referring to the two-director system the team perfected on their classic Tom and Jerry cartoons.

When asked what the two men thought of today's cartoons, Hanna said he liked the work of people such as John Kricfalusi, but doubted that he could ever make shorts with that kind of no-holds-barred humor!

ANIMATO! advertisers AnimEigo had a cozy booth featuring Japanese cookies and a place to sit for weary attendees. The AnimEigo people



Tyrant **creator (and ANIMATO! contributor) Steve Bissette meets Gumby at the VSDA.**

handed out the first dubbed *Bubblegum Crisis* volume to all who wanted it.

The Library of Congress and Smithsonian Video is releasing a new collection of videos entitled *The Origins of American Film*. Presenting rare films from the Library of Congress, the series includes an animation tape, *Origins of American Animation;* twenty-one complete films and fragments featuring the work of pioneers such as Tom Powers, J. Stuart Blackton, Wallace Carlson, and Winsor McCay.

Sony Wonder is continuing its Nickelodeon cartoon releases, and Charles Band's highly successful direct-to video productions under the Full Moon and Moon Beam labels for Paramount announced several new films including productions which feature stop-motion animation. Included on the company's production slate is *Josh Kirby...Time Warrior*, a new serial described as in the "tradition of Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon and Captain Marvel." By the looks of the advertising material, there'll be plenty of story opportunities for David Allen's stop-motion animation.

Paramount is also making a large selection of animated television specials and one feature film featuring Charles Schulz's Peanuts gang. *Race for Your Life, Charlie Brown* will sell at $14.95, while the other tapes are either $9.95 or $12.95.

ABC Video has a Christmas sell-through promotion with *The Little Crooked Christmas Tree, P.J.'s Unfunnybuuny Christmas,* and *A Christmas Carol* all new to video and all priced at $9.95.

Manga Entertainment announced a number of Japanese animation releases for the up-coming year including *Macross Plus, Appleseed, The Mighty Atom, Orguss 02, The Wings of Honneamis,* and *Giant Robo*.

While animation may not always get the respect or attention it deserves from the mainstream press, animation is clearly a mainstay of the video industry.

The Voice of the Panther

Republic Pictures, once known as the studio responsible for the best serials and B-westerns made during Hollywood's golden age, has become a force once again in the entertainment industry with a very active video operation. Besides releasing titles from their large library, Republic is licensing movies for video release and is into production again with a number of direct-to-video releases.

At this year's VSDA, their release of the smash television mini-series, The Stand, was big news, and the company brought in several of the production's stars including Matt Frewer.

Since starring in the innovative series Max Headroom, Frewer has been seen starring in two television sitcoms, and has appeared in a number of movies. (Frankly, I think his character in The Stand was a lot spookier than the Devil himself!)

Frewer is known to animation fans as the new voice of the long-time mute Pink Panther. Getting the assignment wasn't very easy.

"I auditioned fairly extensively actually. It was two or three auditions over the space of two or three weeks. And initially, they were reticent about having the Panther speak at all as he's catatonic for so long. It took them a while to wrap their heads around the Panther having any kind of a voice, but once I was cast they were great," Frewer told ANIMATO! after a marathon autograph session.

Frewer has completed two seasons, which is "about 80 episodes worth, and hopefully it will get picked up for a third."

Frewer has made a reputation as a great comic actor, and while he enjoyed working in animation, he did find the precise, scripted reading of a character's lines to be a little restricting.

He has been able to sneak little ad libs into the shorts, and thoroughly enjoyed the entire process thanks to the people with whom he was working.

A versatile performer who doesn't view himself "even as a comedic actor; just an actor," Frewer enjoys working in both theatrical motion pictures and television. He "goes for the material."

Frewer will be seen next on PBS in an American Playhouse presentation entitled Long Shadows, and on TNT's up-coming documentary In Search of Dr. Seuss.

"Robin Williams, Christopher Llyod, Kathy Najemi and myself all play Dr. Seuss characters," said Frewer."I played the Cat in the Hat."

Appropriate casting, indeed.

GMD

Mondo Space Ghost

Everything you needed to know about the first animated talk show



Has Space Ghost finally met his match? "Weird Al" Yankovic is one of this season's guests. ©1994 Cartoon Network, Inc.

by Judith Reboy

Creator Michael Lazzo speaks about the series

"To me, Space Ghost is real," says Michael Lazzo, executive producer and creator of *Space Ghost Coast to Coast*.. "I know that sounds quite odd," he explains, "but when I watch the show I'm actually hooking into the character, and if someone were to say that Zorak was just ink and paint, I would kinda be depressed for a day or two, if not my entire life."

Lazzo, Programming Director for the Cartoon Network, isn't crazy. He's just crazy about animation, and indulges in a little healthy suspension of disbelief. He further adds, "I'd rather it be about the show and less about just talent, so to speak. A whole lot of things go into creating these, but I'd prefer to even think about them. I'm there every step of the way as we create [*Space Ghost Coast to Coast*.], but, you know, I'd rather forget them and just watch the show unfold on television and think 'Well hey,...on the Ghost Planet, he's up there waiting for his next feed.'

"I know that's probably a little disturbing, but that's kind of the way I look at it, and I've always looked at it like that. I think people think that Cheers was a bar they could have gone to and that Seinfeld is a guy who lives in New York, and the Simpsons live in Springfield. I'm not deluding myself, but I would prefer that Space Ghost remain in my imagination and on television as vivid as he is, and if I think, 'Oh my God, that's just George Lowe that we hired as talent...' I never once thought of Space Ghost as Gary Owens. I just thought of him as Space Ghost."

Lazzo's attitude has served him well at the Cartoon Network. He has supervised the development of many of the Cartoon Network's promotional stunts, like *The Great American Toon-In*. For that show, Lazzo created the character of Moxy, a nervous computer generated dog voiced by Bobcat Goldthwait, who proved popular enough to resurface as the star of *The Moxy Pirate Show*.

No, Moxy doesn't sail the Seven Seas in search of treasure. Rather, the title refers to Moxy overriding the Cartoon Network's signal with an illegal satellite transmission, in a premise not unlike "Weird Al" Yankovic's *Al - TV* specials on MTV.

Among Lazzo's other duties with the Cartoon Network include devising the day to day program schedule. While that may seem like a 'toon lover's dream, it has its headaches as well. When he recently acquired *Ruff and Ready* from the Family Channel, Lazzo had to decide where to place the Hanna-Barbera classic, which turned out to be a challenge, because of its short, serialized format.

His goals for the Cartoon Network include one which, while it seems logical to the average fan, is unusual and refreshing coming from a network executive: To show as many of the older shows as close as possible to the way they originally aired. To that end, he and his associates are busily rescuing long lost material.

Among their more recent acquisitions: The "Rise and Shine" opening from the first two seasons of *The Flintstones*, which was replaced by the familiar "Meet the Flintstones" segment when the show reached syndication. By the end of this year, it will be shown on the appropriate episodes.

Lazzo's team is now actively looking for the original ending, where Fred struggles to put out the cat and then pauses to look out at the twinkling night stars over Bedrock.

Lazzo is also looking forward to restoring the classic original ending from *The Jetsons* ["Jane, stop this crazy thing..."], which has been conspicuous by its absence since the corporate decision was made to use the same opening and closing for the entire series after new episodes were commissioned in the mid-1980's, before Turner Entertainment purchased the Hanna-Barbera library.

"Unfortunately," Lazzo laments, "We only had enough money to clean the prints and make them look a little better. We didn't have enough money to take off all the old closes and put on all these new ones. I budgeted for that in 1995."

He will also be restoring *Quick Draw McGraw* to its original elements now that the Cartoon Network has regained the rights to *Augie Doggie* and *Snooper and Blabber*. However, he is still on the lookout for the some of the original bridge pieces from the old Hanna-Barbera shows.

While he recently gained access to an old storage area, a large portion of what he found was old commercials, or partial snippets of the missing materials. An exception to this was *The Flagstones*, the previously unaired pilot for *The Flintstones* that aired this past summer on the Cartoon Network.

Despite the magnitude of the research task, Lazzo remains undaunted. "To me, there's something that makes me feel better knowing that's how it was meant to be seen."

Although he points out that he "loves all television, if it's good and compelling television," Lazzo's list of favorite shows leans heavily towards cartoons: *The Larry Sanders Show, The Simpsons, Ren and Stimpy* (particularly the first season), *Batman: The Animated Series*, and *Eek! The Cat*.

Of *Eek!*, Lazzo says, "Personally, I would love to have that show [on the Cartoon Network], because I just think I could do some wonderful things with it." He cites the show's solid standing in the middle of the ratings even when placed in extremely competitive time slots as an indicator of a faithful fan following, and he believes that it has the potential to be a big hit with adult audiences who may not have been exposed to it on Saturday mornings.

He is also willing to admit a certain fondness for John Kricfalusi's controversial *Beany and Cecil* revival. Unfortunately, the local station that aired the show in Atlanta during its brief run wasn't nearly as interested. Lazzo recounts having to set his VCR earlier each week to catch it. The last Episode, which was supposed to air at 8:00 AM aired at 6:00 AM instead!

In the wake of the Children's Television Act and Senator Paul Simon's war on violence in children's programming, cartoons are currently under siege, and the residents of the Cartoon Network have both a staunch supporter and eloquent spokesman in Michael Lazzo.

"I've just felt that you can use any medium to educate and explain," he says in response to a proposal that reached Capitol Hill suggesting that cartoons should not be counted as educational material under the Children's Television Act when local stations apply for license renewal. "Sometimes [education and cartoons] are inseparable and sometimes their completely different."

"I grew up watching the cartoons that you're now seeing all over television," he continues. "...The Warner Brothers, the MGMs, the Hanna-Barberas, the Japanese [like] *Speed Racer*.....I still managed to get an education and to be able to interact with people quite well without dropping an anvil on anyone or handing someone a stick of dynamite. I have to disagree when people get on their soapboxes about [how cartoons are] 'not good for you and even destructive to the learning process.'"

While he truly loves animation, Lazzo admits, "...There is animation in the world that was not intended to be viewed by younger children. There are aspects of cartoons that were created in the 30's and 40's that feature racial stereotyping that I personally believe a very young child is not sophisticated enough to make a distinction between satire and parody, or understand the climate in which that cartoon was produced.

"In that case, okay, I understand. You don't want to show certain things to certain audiences. But to lump cartoons per se as one big bag of destructiveness, or [to say that they are] 'not good for children...' That's just ignorance speaking."

Lazzo probably speaks for the bulk of **ANIMATO!** readers when he says, "Like any other entertainment vehicle, there's bad cartoons, just as there are brilliant, great, artful cartoons. The same goes for books, live action television and movies. But to hammer *Huckleberry Hound* or *Tom and Jerry* as something that's destructive...I just can't buy into, mainly because it certainly didn't negatively affect me. I think it's wrong that [media watchdogs] should go around picking targets like that without truly understanding them."

Space Ghost Unmasked!: A Talk with George Lowe

The original announcements for the Cartoon Network's *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* boasted Gary Owens' return to the role. However, soon into production, it became clear that it would be necessary to find someone local to the network's Atlanta facilities in order to produce episodes in a timely fashion.

After an extensive search, veteran radio personality George Lowe was chosen to lend a voice, as well as his own offbeat sense of humor, to the world's first animated talk show host.

Lowe was already well known in the Atlanta area, having produced the top rated radio show in that market. Previously, he hosted *PM Magazine* at a Florida station, and he has done a number of radio and television commercials. Immediately prior to *Space Ghost*, he made his film debut in George Lucas' *Radioland Murders*.

Strangely, he claims that his big break came in the form of a job he didn't get. After losing a contract with a station in Los Angeles, Lowe built a strong career as a freelance announcer, which eventually lead to *Space Ghost*. "And how could I say no to something as unique as this," he says.



Locust or mantis? All will be revealed this season ©1994 Cartoon Network, Inc.

Although a self-proclaimed cartoon "zealot," Lowe has never worked in animation before. That's somewhat surprising, considering his extensive background in commercial voiceovers, standup comedy, and impressions. He is reputed to be able to do over 100 voices, including Andy Griffith and Don Pardo.

He engaged in a little good natured rivalry with Pardo, the legendary voice of *Saturday Night Live*. After Lowe impersonated Pardo for a radio promo, Pardo taped one for a rival station saying, "The real McCoy, not some cheesy imitation." (Lowe, who really can match Pardo's distinctive tones perfectly, takes great pride in that his spot was good enough to provoke a response.)

However, he chose not to impersonate Gary Owens as the voice of Space Ghost, using instead what he calls a "booming Mister Announcer voice" not too far from his own. "I just pump the voice a little more...It's just a little louder and a little more pompous."

He also is credited with giving *Space Ghost* a bit more of an acid wit than his previous incarnations. Since his show's crew has spent most of the last quarter century trying to kill him, that may be a good thing! Originally, a staffer did the interviews, and Lowe's voice was dubbed in

later. But the character began to really come alive when Lowe began to do the interviews himself, and started adlibbing biting side comments that let viewers get beneath Space Ghost's stoic outward appearance.

Although *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* is really only cursorily a talk show, interviews do in fact play a major role on the show. So it was essential that Space Ghost be able to hold his own in an interview situation. Lowe, an established pro, uses what he calls his "sick breadth of knowledge" to connect with a wide variety of guests. "I can usually find something to talk to almost anyone about," he adds.

Lowe is a big fan of the old Tex Avery cartoons. "If somebody gets smacked in the head with a hammer, that's big comedy to me." Turning somewhat uncharacteristically serious for a moment, he takes the thought a little further: "I don't know if it's genetic or what, but back then, kids knew if you really smacked somebody in the head with a baseball bat, it would hurt them. Now [cartoon violence] is an excuse to go and do it."

Lowe is incensed by one very shocking fact about the Cartoon Network: It is not currently being broadcast in its own home town of Atlanta! "There's a lot of wok cooking and home shopping that has to be taken care of," he quips, "but those are the real cash cows for the cable people."

He recalls watching the original *Space Ghost* faithfully with his best friend as a child, and considers the role "a tremendous treat."

Part of that treat is the high calibre of guests that the show attracts. He was particularly pleased to have the opportunity to interview Joe Franklin, whom he calls "a monster interviewer" for an episode spotlighting talk shows.

He calls *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* creator Michael Lazzo and senior producer Keith Crofford "a joy to work with," and adds that "Anywhere else they would be thought of as 'too hip for the room.'" But their wacky sensibilities are perfect for the show Lowe describes proudly as a "90's *Rocky and Bullwinkle.*"

The most lasting impression one gets from talking with George Lowe is of a man basically reveling in the overall silliness of the latest path his career has taken. Not that he sees this as a bad thing.

In his words, "You've got to have silly. Just ask the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

Senior Producer Keith Crofford

Keith Crofford, Senior Producer of *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* is the "serious" member of the production team. Of course, in this case, that doesn't automatically mean that he's downbeat. The head of what he calls "a talk show for people with skewered sensibilities," Crofford's deceptively businesslike manner hides an offbeat sense of humor.

Like Executive Producer Michael Lazzo, Crofford has taken to referring to his cartoon star as a flesh and blood (as opposed to ink and paint) person. When discussing exactly how interviews are conducted, he volunteers that, "We're able to patch Space Ghost into [a guest's] ear from the phone lines on the Ghost Planet. So they actually talk to Space Ghost. They can't see him, but they do get to talk to him."

He also matter-of-factly explains Space Ghost's entry into the Talk Show Wars: "He's a retired superhero. If he hears talk of a war, he's got to get in on it. He put Zorak and Moltar away in prison. They were two of his favorite villains, so he recruited them. It was either spend the rest of their lives in the Omegan Prison or come to work on the show. What would you do?"

When not reigning in the insanity on *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* [if that's at all possible], Crofford spends much of his time producing independent films made by Southern filmmakers. The most famous of these is *Ruby in Paradise,* which helped establish the career of actress Ashley Judd, who appeared on *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* to discuss her prowess at making chocolate pies.

When asked about his future plans for the show, Crofford shows considerable pride in the finished product. "We're always tweaking as far as what makes the show work better, but we took a while to develop the show and we're pretty happy with it."

Although he does mention one scheduled change: "We're giving Zorak a ray gun in future episodes, so he might be able to fight back a little..." So much for seriousness!



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"Live" from Ghost Planet

Take old footage of a venerable hero, mix in a talk show format and sometimes befuddled guests, and you get what may be the hippest animated series on television.

By Judith Reboy

It all started innocently enough. Peace was finally achieved on the galactic front. Space Ghost's wards, Jan and Jace, grew up and headed off to college. Even his faithful pet monkey, Blip, left to visit relatives. So, Space Ghost decided to look for new battles to fight.

He quickly discovered that Earth was embroiled in a bitter conflict: The Talk Show Wars! Being a true hero, he decided to do something about it. Thus, according to the Cartoon Network, was borne the first ever animated talk show, *Space Ghost Coast to Coast!*

According to its creators, the inspiration for this delightfully subversive 15 minute program, which airs on the Cartoon Network Friday nights at 11:00 EST was actually another television legend. Senior producer Keith Crofford claims that the show's creator and executive producer Michael Lazzo came up with the idea by imagining a talk show hosted by the late Jack Webb! Space Ghost, being the next most logical candidate, got the job instead.

Lazzo and Crofford put together a crude demo tape of a CNN interview intercut with an old Space Ghost cartoon, and eventually sold the Cartoon Network on the project. Initially, original Space Ghost voice Gary Owens was approached to recreate the part, but the show's technical demands made it necessary to find someone local to the show's Atlanta production facilities to take over.

Popular Atlanta radio personality George Lowe eventually won the role, and his offbeat sense of humor proved to be perfect for the role of outer space interviewer. Lowe conducts the interviews himself with the assistance of the Cartoon Network's sister station, CNN, via an interruptible feedback system, such as those used on live news shows. Guests never see him, and he speaks to them only as Space Ghost.

"We like to keep the mystique," says Lowe. "It makes it a little easier to play around too." With typical self-effacing humor, he adds, "I've been told that I frighten barn animals as well, which is why they'd rather not have me in public."



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The finished product shows the animated Space Ghost talking to live action guests via a television monitor, supposedly from a location on his home world, the Ghost Planet. Apparently the atmosphere is somewhat different than Earth's, since many guests are asked if they have enough oxygen.

A staff of writers provide Space Ghost with an array of questions to ask, but like all great talk show hosts, he sometimes veers from them if the mood strikes him, or as Lowe says, "They write the questions, but if I go off on a tangent, they let me go off on a tangent." Perhaps the most legendary incident involved *New York Times* columnist Bill Carter, who had to field the line, "So, tell me about your trousers."

Lowe proudly takes credit for the line, which didn't make it in to the finished show, but was widely reported in the popular press. Crofford says that the line has taken on "kind of a life of its own," joking (I think), that they may do an "all trousers" show in the future to capitalize on its notoriety.

When pressed for an explanation, Lowe offers, "I'm concerned about trouser comfort in America. I think it's an issue we don't spend enough time addressing, because if you have uncomfortable slacks...Face it, who wants to go through a day in uncomfortable slacks. I know I don't." He regrets that the line was left on the cutting room floor, since, "everyone seems to laugh at it." One of his current ambitions is to ask President Clinton about his trousers (as if running shorts didn't get our Chief Executive in enough trouble!).

Lowe and the writers don't have all the fun. Sometimes the editors meddle with the interviews to make them funnier, although Lazzo, Crofford and Lowe all stress that this doesn't happen very often. One obvious example had actress Ashley Judd rambling on about chocolate pies while Space Ghost asks her about Mexican cuisine.

Meanwhile, outtake footage of infomercial superstar Susan Powter eating pasta salad, and even walking off camera to get salt made it into the pilot tape, just for the humorous potential of the sight of a bewildered Space Ghost talking momentarily to a blank monitor.

Space Ghost himself is not immune to the whims of the editing process. Lowe recalls his interview with the Ramones, "I'm in the studio cutting my lines the way we ultimately had them written. Everyone was happy, and we all agreed on how they would sound, and in the middle of it I burp and blow the take, and I said, 'Terribly sorry, too many Cokes.' It actually did air!"

In the early stages of development, it was decided that Space Ghost, like Johnny Carson and David Letterman before him, would have a sidekick to both support and torment him. Originally, Herve Villechalze of *Fantasy Island* fame was signed for that purpose. His untimely death soon after the show was announced created a void that was difficult to fill.

The solution came from an unlikely source, according to Lazzo. "We had a list of maybe 20 different people, and none of us were really taken with any of them. And one day, we were at a meeting talking about the show with the design people, and one of the animators started mimicking Zorak [a villain from the original series] and it just made me laugh. I said, 'You know, you'd be a great Zorak in the show.' I'm pretty sure that's where it came from...Just hearing that voice in a different situation than just watching the cartoon."

And thus a star was born. It became a running subplot in the show that Space Ghost had imprisoned all his archenemies (at least the ones he hadn't blown up!). To prevent them from interfering with his new venture, he put two of them on a work release program from galactic prison: Zorak, an insect-like being serves as the musical director and band leader and Moltar, described by the Ghost himself as a "fire maniac" in a radiation suit, directs the show. (Incidentally both are voiced by animation director C. Martin Croker.)

Moltar seems to have grudgingly accepted his lot in life — He even calls Space Ghost "Boss!" Zorak is a bit more of a malcontent, and as such, walks away with the show. He talks back to Space Ghost, frightens guests, and books the Bee Gees to do a guest spot when nobody's looking! In the first batch of episodes, the worst one can say of Moltar is that he spent one show watching a rerun of *Chips* when he was supposed to be working. (And unlike Zorak, to date, Space Ghost has not threatened to sic the Orkin man on him!)

It's clear that the production team has fun with them. The pilot episode featured a parody of those dreadful K-Tel commercials featuring a recording called *Zorak and Moltar Sing Your Favorite Nursery Rhymes and Lullabyes*, featuring titles like "Sharing Means Gimmie," and "Zorak Had a Little Lazer" amid standards like "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and "On Top of Spaghetti."

Both Crofford and Lazzo indicate that if enough fans wrote and asked for it, they'd gladly record this twisted album for real! Lazzo in particular is taken with the idea. "Absolutely! If enough people write us, we would go into the studio so fast to cut that because it was just so much fun writing and recording that." He even played guitar at the recording session.

"We all work in cable," he continues, "and so we see those kind of spots day in and day out. And the ability to go in and create just the silliest one you've ever seen...It was just so much fun! And I gotta tell you, I'd love to do a tape with each and every one of those songs...And frankly, I think we could!" (Note: Zorak and Moltar fans, send your requests to Keith Crofford and Michael Lazzo c/ o the Cartoon Network, 1050 Techwood Drive, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30318! Write soon and write often!)

Lazzo also says that because of public response, we'll probably hear Zorak singing on the show again soon. Actually, there are a couple of subplots involving Zorak in the next batch of shows, according to Crofford. He promises that the baddies will stage a revolt, and take over the show in one episode, and in another, Zorak, the self-proclaimed "Lone Locust of the Apocalypse," will be discovering his roots.

"We've been calling him a locust, but in the next show he's going to bring up the fact that he's really a mantis, and Locar [another character from the original series] was the locust. He's going to set the record straight...He didn't really realize what's been going on with all this locust talk, but when he found out it's about him, the record's gotta be cleared."

Lazzo claims this issue came up as they were gearing up for the second batch of episodes. Staffers began to argue back and forth about what kind of insect Zorak actually was, and they decided that it would be a great idea to allow the debate to continue in the finished product. Apparently, the issue has not been settled, although Lazzo may be indicating where he stands when he calls Zorak "quite the lovable locust."

The music of Zorak and the Original Way Outs is the brainchild of Jazz guitarist Sonny Sharrock, who incorporated the first few notes of the ethereal theme from the original *Space Ghost* series whenever he could. The producers are so fond of the end result that the end credits include "The Original Way Outs are really good," and "Support the genius of Sonny Sharrock." Tragically, Sharrock passed away on May 26, just as the show was reaching cult status. However, Crofford promises that his music will live on in future episodes.

Booking guests for the show has been an adventure in itself, particularly in the beginning. "You're trying to find guests and tell them that they're going to be talking to a cartoon and [they say] 'Excuse me?' There were a few hurdles to overcome when we were trying to explain the show and had nothing to show people." says Crofford.

Lowe says that most of the interviewees fell into two groups, "There were the ones that completely got the joke and were completely into it, or there were the ones who sat there thinking it was going to be Montel, and I was going to ask them about their sex life."

Crofford says that "We try to prepare [the guests] as best we can. Now, a lot of the cartoon buffs are calling us, and they kinda know what to expect. Some people [still] say 'What did I just do?' and 'How did it go? Did I do okay?' It kind of befuddles them, but when they see the final product, they're usually pretty happy."

Strangely enough, Lazzo and Crofford recall the same interview that didn't go quite right. Crofford was the first to indicate that the reason for the brevity of the Bee Gee's appearance on the pilot episode was due to lack of usable footage. "They...were kind of potty-mouthed, and we're a family network," he states diplomatically.

Lazzo is more vocal. "They just literally walked in, and just mocked the whole situation, so we felt that Space Ghost just had no recourse but to just blow them off...It took us about three seconds to make that decision."

He allows that "I think they were caught a little off guard by the show. You know, you never really know what translates, and maybe that Letterman kind of silly humor...I don't know if they got into it or if they're big Monty Python fans or what have you, but they did not take it in the spirit in which we intended, so as soon as they start chuckling, Space Ghost pulls out the heat ray and they're gone..."

"If you notice on the tape, we actually put in a little scream of the Bee Gees. That makes me laugh each and every time I hear it."

There's also a general consensus as to the best the show has to offer. Bobcat Goldthwait, who stirred up quite a controversy on the talk show circuit this year, was named by Lazzo, Crofford and Lowe as one of the best guests they had ever had.

Crofford characterizes Goldthwait, who voices Moxy for the Cartoon Network's *Moxy Pirate Show* as "funny and off beat, kinda like the show." (Both he and George Lowe are also quick to point out that *Space Ghost* has had better luck with him than other late night shows because, being animated, there was no set for him to incinerate!)

Crofford and Lowe both hold high praises for *Tonight Show* bandleader Branford Marsalis, who Crofford says is a "big, big fan of the show and the Cartoon Network in general."

Jazz expert Lowe recalls his favorite encounter with Marsalis: "I challenged him to a jazz standard known as 'The Cherokee' and he figured this ultra unhip sounding guy in a cape would certainly know nothing about jazz and he says, 'Man, you don't know no 'Cherokee' and I said, 'Well, go ahead and count it off then.' And he counts it off and sure enough, note for note, we're boppin' away."

All told, it seems as though the problems the show had booking guests are now a thing of the past, as people like Marsalis, ex-Talking Head David Byrne and rock parodist "Weird Al" Yankovic have sought out the producers, and asked to appear on the show.

When asked if any of the Ghost's cartoon peers will appear on the show, Lazzo is quite enthusiastic. "I think it's a natural. I would love to interview Snuffles from the *Quick Draw* series, and my very favorite character, Mr. Jinx from *Pixie and Dixie*. I love the guy, and I'd love to see him on the show."

He indicated that the first animated guest may already be on tap. Lazzo figures it would be appropriate to follow rapper Schooly D, who recently taped an interview, with cartoon mutt Scooby Doo!

Of course, the most essential part of a successful talk show is a good host, so the obvious question arises: Who is Space Ghost? Since Hanna-Barbera never addressed this issue, the *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* team had their work cut out for them.

Lowe's answer is both philosophical and silly: "[Space Ghost is] kind of like that guy who was popular in those 60's movies who would just come into town one day, playing the harmonica

and riding the rails. Nobody knows where he's from; Nobody knows where he's going, but everybody know's he's okay. Kind of like Boxcar Willie with a cape."

Lazzo chooses to define the character by his personality. "That's the first question that all of us ever asked," he says, "and we know it as well as we know any person who's a stranger. He's kind of a cross between a Jack Webb law-and-order type and your next door neighbor's dad when you were growing up.

"He's kind of unapproachable. He has a sense of humor that's kind of a sense of humor to him, but not necessarily your's. He doesn't quite get it. He might laugh inappropriately, or too long at something that you think is just mildly amusing. And I think that that's a sense of the character more than any other aspect of it."

Crofford is quick to point out that Space Ghost's secret identity, Ted Ghostel, was already revealed by Zorak on the show, and he hints that perhaps he knows more than he's telling. "We have our own Space Ghost chronology which we might divulge in a future show."

This may include a guest appearance by Space Ghost's adopted children, Jan and Jace (voiced on the original series by Ginny Tyler and Tim Matheson.), and Blip the Space Monkey. Asked if they would be played straight or used for parody, Lazzo is insistent that they would be treated with a certain amount of reverence. "I must say I had a terrible crush on Jan as a child, and I still kind of do, so I would be sensitive as to Jan and how she would appear. So I don't think we'd take them too far away."

Moreover, he contends that the portrayal of the regular cast of *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* is perfectly consistent with what has gone before, and it is important to him that they remain so. "Zorak was a bad guy, and he's still a bad guy," says Lazzo. "Space Ghost was a good guy and still is. But importantly to me, Space Ghost always had a sense of humor in the original series, and he's got a sense of humor now."

Lazzo is very fond of the original series, which he stresses was the first serious superhero cartoon made for television, and a major influence on much of what came after it. He isn't shy about pointing out the physical resemblance between his star and the leading man of *Batman: The Animated Series*.

"It just kind of exploded and got some attention. And Hanna-Barbera themselves did superhero show after superhero show after that. They just didn't have the same spirit and feel to me as *Space Ghost* did, although...I like *Birdman;* I like *Fantastic Four*, but *Space Ghost* will always be my favorite."

Merchandising for *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* has been slow in coming. [For those of you who have been looking, the CD soundtrack mentioned in *TV Guide* this spring is currently only available to the press.] The producers have been mulling over T-shirt designs submitted for their approval, but as of yet, they haven't found anything that captures the unique feel of the show.

Lazzo recalls the first review he'd read, from the *New York Post* was generally favorable, but cracked that "We bet those T-shirts are rolling off the presses right now." "I read that," remembers Lazzo, "and [I thought], 'Well no...Not at all.' What's the show like? How do the characters feel? Those kinds of things influence the merchandising, not the fact that it's some bizarre concept. We want [any licensed products] to be as special as we think the show is."

Apparently, there has been some talk of a CD-ROM version of the show, but Lazzo quips that he'll only do it "if I think it's a CD-ROM with a reason to live."

However, computer literate fans needn't wait for that day. According to Crofford, the Cartoon Network has an "Ask Moltar" bulletin board on America OnLine, where subscribers can seek information about cartoons or advice from the captive supervillain.

Animation for the show is done locally in Atlanta by DESIGN efx, who utilize the vast library of *Space Ghost* footage available to create the final product. "A lot of the stuff we pulled from old cartoons, [like] the Moltar stuff...a lot of the Space Ghost poses" says Crofford. "We have a library of poses. We've done some new animation, some we rotoscoped out of old cartoons."

Of course, what they've done with the old footage shows a tremendous amount of creativity. Cat creature Brax and one of his lieutenants appeared in the pilot as sort of an intergalactic *Beavis and Butthead*. Another show featured "bloopers" from the original series, where a giant explosion was said to be Space Ghost accidentally blowing up somebody's car!

Crofford sees the show's running time as a throwback to the Golden Age of Television, where 15 minute programs were not all that unusual, and he is comfortable with that format. Besides, he adds, "We'd have to get lots more money [for a longer show]." However, he does not discount the possibility of multiple shows being run together in a half hour or hour time slot.

One thing he doesn't see, however, is a change of time slot. "We are a late night show. *Space Ghost* was developed for late night. It was the first step to more quirky, off-beat stuff to draw an older audience for the late night hours. We're planning more and different stuff for a late night slot."

Reviews have been generally positive, and the ratings have been consistent enough for sponsor SEGA to commit for another season. On one particularly difficult Friday night, Lazzo received some encouraging news about his brainchild. While most of the country was breathlessly awaiting to see if O.J. Simpson would emerge from the white Ford Bronco in front of his estate, "We built coming out of *Bugs Bunny*. The whole night was obviously quite depressed with people watching the O.J. Simpson story. But for the first time, *Space Ghost* out performed *Bugs Bunny*, even though everything viewing was down.

"That was a situation that normally is reversed. You normally get big numbers from *Bugs Bunny* and you drop a little bit when you go into *Space Ghost*..That showed me that people are appointment viewing the show."

When asked what his "dream list" of guests would be for the show, George Lowe says that he'd like to match "Truman Capote and Einstein on the same show, just to see what would happen — 'In Cold Quantum.'" Michael Lazzo's ideal is a bit more earthbound. He'd like to see Space Ghost conduct a peace summit with Talk Show Wars veterans Johnny Carson, Jay Leno and David Letterman.

What can we expect for the future? Keith Crofford promises that Space Ghost will recite poetry, and Lowe suggests that their future guest lists will remain top notch. "Frankly, if it's somebody that's hot, or has a good story to tell, chances are we're going to get them in there."

But still, what kind of a show is *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* really? Here's what the men responsible for it have to say:

Crofford says the show is "more of an offbeat comedy show than a talk show really."

Lazzo finds the definitive answer a little more difficult. He at first calls the show "a talk show from outer space, and all that would entail...There's an otherworldly aspect to it." But then he quickly adds, "It's not really a talk show. It's kind of a strange hybrid of a talk show format but obviously done for comedic sake. We're not really as interested in [does his best Space Ghost impression] 'Well, what are you doing now, Citizen?' as just generally having fun with personalities who we feel are recognizable to people into pop culture."

Eventually, he settles on the definition of "A pop culture show from outer space."

Lowe's answer makes his work atmosphere sound more like play. He describes the studio as "a madhouse where everyone's allowed to walk around without a guard...We're basically all allowed to run around the day room and we still get knives to cut our steaks up."

Of course, it is only fitting that we leave the last words to the star of the show, Space Ghost, who adds through Lowe that "Our program is all-rightie!"

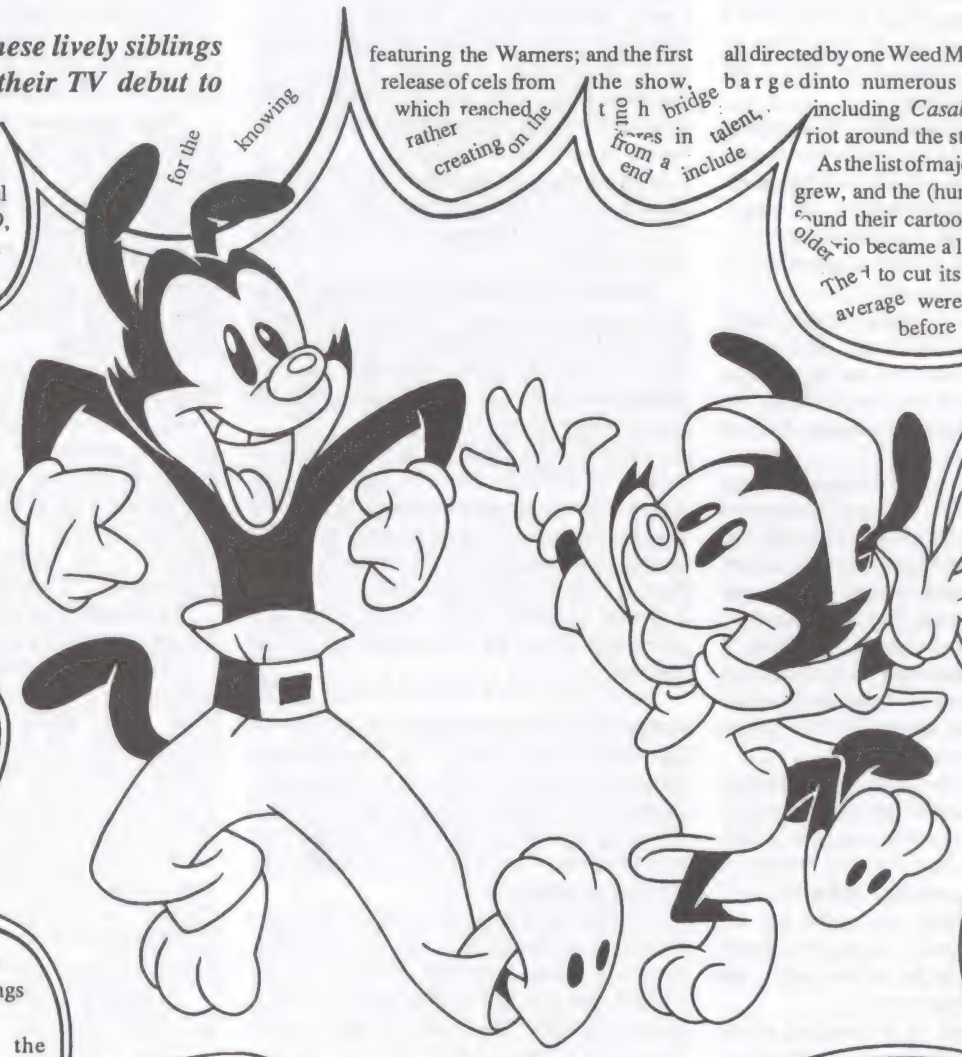
Judith Reboy is a regular contributor to ANIMATO!

THE RISE OF STEVEN SPIELBERG'S ANIMANIACS

In a year's time these lively siblings have gone from their TV debut to the big screen

By Paula O'Keefe

When their musical short subject, *I'M MAD*, appeared in movie theatres in Spring 1994 as all the opening act to Don Bluth's *Thumbelina*, the Warner Brothers - and sister - should have fired celebratory skyrockets from their famous water tower. Not only was it Warn Brothers' first ne theatrical cartoo since 1988, it was the crowning event in a meteoric half-year career that has elevated the speedy siblings to stardom.



Animaniacs, the Warners' weekday afternoon series on Fox, aired its first episode in September 1993. Since that date it's been well reviewed in *Newsweek*, was featured in a *TV Guide* article on modern TV animation, has twice made *TV Guide's* list of the best shows for children, and won the prestigious Peabody Award for excellence in broadcasting. *Animaniacs* merchandise was the most-requested item in Warner Studio Stores months before any was available. A CD of sixteen original songs from the show has been issued, along with a sampler cassette called TWISTED TUNES; McDonald's has run an *Animaniacs* "Happy Meal" promotion including a line of eight specially designed toys, four of these be looked appropriate they got $500.00. Not bad for kids who kicked off the lot barely a year after their creation, sixty years ago.

At least, that's what they say. As the series history tells it, Yakko, Wakko, and Dot Warner were invented in 1930, or thereabouts, by "An unnamed animator who 'crossed over the edge'". (The episode "Warners' 65th Anniversary Special" gave him a name, Lon Borax, and added that he's now in an asylum!) They officially appeared in several cartoon shorts - including *Pipsqueeks, Nutty Newsies,* and *Krazee Kiddos*, all directed by one Weed Memlo - and unofficially barged into numerous feature productions, including *Casablanca* while running riot around the studio.

As the list of major stars they'd offended grew, and the (human) Warner Brothers found their cartoons increasingly dizzy, older rio became a liability, and the studio The d to cut its losses. The Warners' average were locked in a vault before "never to be released," and the Warners themselves were nprisoned in the 110-foot water tower on the Burbank lot. (Or, as the April 1, 1931 front page of "Varieties" put it, HOT SHOTS BOOT LOT TOTS.)

The tower must be an airtight prison; it took the Warners more than half-a-century to figure a way out. There's first two me interesting "new history" here. As these events are seen in the framing episode "Newsreel of the Stars" - along with the above-mentioned "Varieties" headline - the "unnamed animator" is a Tex Avery lookalike, and his working space is proudly bannered "Termite Terrace Animation." Of course, neither Termite Terrace nor Tex Avery was yet a fixture at Warner Brothers in 1930-31, but that's not really material. What's important is that these characters are being placed firmly just beforethe golden age of theatrical animation at WB; though newly created, they're presented as not just contemporaries but predecessors of the classic stars. (We're even told that they made their debut co-starring with Buddy.)

WE SAID.... THE RISE OF STEVEN SPIELBERG'S ANIMANIACS

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At least, that's what they say. As the series history tells it, Yakko, Wakko, and Dot Warner were invented in 1930, or thereabouts, by "An unnamed animator who 'crossed over the edge'". (The episode "Warners' 65th Anniversary Special" gave him a name, Lon Borax, and added that he's now in an asylum!) They officially appeared in several cartoon shorts - including *Pipsqueeks, Nutty Newsies,* and *Krazee Kiddos*, all directed by one Weed Memlo - and unofficially barged into numerous feature productions, including *Casablanca* while running riot around the studio.

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The other point worth noting is that these references - Buddy, the Avery resemblance, the "Termite Terrace" sign - are in-jokes that hardly anyone in a school-age audience could be expected to get. They're for the pleasure of their creators and other dedicated fans. (And "dedicated" seems the right word; affection and pride in the WB toon heritage stand behind nearly every frame.) Not only do the Warners come from the same historical lineage as Bugs and Daffy, this sequence says, we're giving them the same not-for-kids humor and the same cartoon self-awareness as well. They're designed as both the forerunners and the inheritors of the Looney Tune and Merrie Melody legacy. "I am quite proud to be in such a hierarchical progeny, from Daffy Duck and Tweety Bird to Babs and Buster Bunny." — Yakko, to a Gilbert and Sullivan melody in *H.M.S. Yakko*

The typical *Animaniacs* script is straightforward: find some self-important windbag and deflate him/her, having as much fun and making as much noise as possible while doing it. Whether their intention is to help their target - Michelangelo, Einstein, Beethoven et al. - create his masterpiece, to punish and avenge, or just to get out alive, the Warners spare no one's dignity, acknowledge no authority and are virtually impossible to impress. Scary and imposing figures like Saddam Hussein, the Grim Reaper, and even Satan himself get the same irreverent runaround as ordinary businessmen and schoolmarms. (in fact, it took no less an occasion than the birth of Christ to make them show a little respect, and even then they tossed in a jazz version of "Little Drummer Boy.")

The Animaniacs know the Jones Rules of Order and always have a reason for their mischief: they never attack without provocation, but once provoked never stop until they see justice done. And it's a good thing most targets are deserving (the exception was an unfortunate birthday clown who ran afoul of Wakko's severe clownophobia), because Warner justice always involves reducing the foe to either total humiliation or babbling psychosis, usually by tossing his/her sense of reality into a blender. They have a wicked genius for spotting just what will make you crack and performing whatever it takes with relish. Cute, all right, but only a fool would cross 'em.

The Warners' talent for chaos, though, doesn't overshadow the basically positive spirit of *Animaniacs*. The siblings are cheerful and endearing characters, inseparable from and protective of each other without being icky about it ("We're a set, like Civil War chess pieces from the Franklin Mint!"), and full of exuberant energy and fun. Clever song and dance numbers, most of them composed by the ingenious Randy Rogel and scored by a full orchestra (including Carl Stalling's own piano!), appear in almost every episode. The creative staff has sensibly concluded that negative vibes just waste time better spent careening around the lot, and this attitude extends from a general no-guns policy to the Warners' cooperative teamwork, in which complaining, bickering, and competition for screen time are refreshingly minimal. Dismissing the rules of etiquette in *"Taming of the Screwy,"* they sing, "We'd rather spend our energy on having a good time!"

Much of what makes it possible for the siblings to carry on at their frenetic pace is, of course, the quality of animation they receive. Warners episodes run the gamut from excellent (Tokyo Movie Shinsha [TMS], who did the unjustly overlooked *Blinkins* series for CBS in 1986 and are presently best known for their work on *Batman: The Animated Series*) through competent (Wang and Akom) to sadly awkward and unappealing (most of the episodes done by Startoons and Freelance).

The latter services, though somewhat more successful with the other *Animaniacs* characters,

have never quite gotten a grip on the Warners, and the results make pretty rough viewing: face shapes and size relationships between the characters often change from scene to scene, motion and expressions are limited, pacing lags, and quality generally suffers. On the plus side, Wang's work shows it's not vital to stick to the model sheets if you have a clear understanding of the characters. Their rubbery renderings of the Warner trio, though radically different from the cutely rounded Shinsha models, are adept and funny, especially suited to episodes that pretend to be rediscovered theatrical shorts from the '30's.

Shinsha, though, is unquestionably top of the line. *BATMAN* producer Bruce Timm has made no secret of his disappointment that TMS, when offered the chance to remain with *Batman: The Animated Series* or work with Spielberg on *Animaniacs* chose the latter. While one can understand his feelings, it certainly seems the appropriate choice. Though TMS is certainly capable of classy dramatic work (they did *Batman* 's striking title sequence and several episodes, including the impressive climax of the two-part *Feet of Clay*), *Batman,* with its angular, stylized setting and character designs, offers little opportunity for Shinsha to do the wild, fluid, extravagant action and expressive personality work at which they truly shine.

Animaniacs is a wide-open field for all of these. Take a brief (and very funny) episode like "The Senses Song" for example; the amount of action in this number is eye-popping, with scenes so fast that even a frame-by-frame look scarcely gets it all. A sequence in which Dot sprays Wakko with water, recoils as he bares huge fangs and lunges, dives under him as he lands in a puddled splat and retaliates by snatching off his hat while he reforms and starts off the floor again, takes just four seconds - each split second crammed with reaction takes and full physical follow-through. In another song short, "Yakko's World," what could have been a static visual performance - Yakko pointing out the countries on a global map while singing all their names in rhyme - is lively and entertaining, thanks to Shinsha's skill with movement and expression. Yakko spins and dances his way through the list of nations, flipping the pointer hand-to-hand and beaming with infectious delight, before being rolled up in the map at the finish. Whether in big chase finales ("Temporary Insanity", "Taming of the Screwy") or small stories that get their laughs from the Warners' unique personalities, ("Fair Game," "Ups and Downs") Shinsha's ability to combine manic energy with clean and appealing character art has made for the Warners' best cartoons.

So what are these Warners? Dr. Otto Scratchansniff, the frazzled studio psychiatrist (the siblings are all considered loony enough to be in therapy), asked them that once, and got a variety of suggestions that ranged from dogs, cats, and bunnies to giant fleas. Series producer Tom Ruegger hits the mark: "generic 1930's cartoon animals." Thin and black with long mobile ears, Krazy Kat tails and big bunny paws, the Warners sport the Mickey/Foxy profiles and white gloves of their era, while their hand-me-down clothes are both period and timeless. Both physical shape and dress, though, are temporary things with the Warner three, who can not only squash-and-stretch with the best but go through dozens of whirlwind costume changes per episode.

The Warners' leader is lanky older brother Yakko, vocalized by former Ninja Turtle Rob Paulsen, and designed as a quick-thinking, fast-talking, irresistible wiseguy in the Bugs mode. Yakko gets as much mileage out of expression and mannerism as he does from his vocabulary, and can speak volumes with a raised eyebrow. An incorrigible flirt and charmer with a weakness for showgirls, he's a song-and-dance man as well, who looks way-cool in white tie and tails and displays a particular flair for fast, tongue-twisting numbers; sort of a cross between Groucho Marx and Fred Astaire with a touch of Danny Kaye. Decision-maker of the trio, he's the one Dot and Wakko look to for direction, and the only one who can (though seldom does) call them off the attack. Though, like any big brother, he's quick to tease and insult his younger sibs, he's just as quick to spring to their defense when necessary. Yakko sings most of the solos, singles out targets ("—today's Special Friend!"), and is generally the spearhead of the Warner assault.

Little sister Dot, vocalized by Tress MacNeille of Babs Bunny (*Tiny Toon Adventures*) fame, is the Warner in most danger of being overlooked. Her strongest traits - slightly exasperated common sense and practicality - only really shine when both brothers are off-balance, and since that's unusual, Dot seldom gets to show her stuff. She's also convinced of her own adorableness, and needs to be taken down a peg now and then (as the boys do in demolishing her showcase solo, "I'm Cute"). Dot's funniest bits, though, come from playing both with and against feminine typecasting, such as the Indian princess routine in "Turkey Jerky" - which begins with her announcing herself as "Princess Pretty Deer, who moves like a springtime-fresh gazelle" and escalates to a scalding "You cad! I'm leaving you and keeping the ring!" - or the moment in "Hot, Bothered and Bedeviled" when she zooms from her petite self to a snarling fifty-foot Dotzilla and back to herself in about eight seconds, twinkling "Just a little thing I do." Moments like this showcase the steel backbone and fiendish temper under that pretty-in-pink exterior. Woe to the adversary who doesn't spot those; like any girl with two older brothers (and these are no ordinary brothers!), she learned to hold her own and trade



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shot for shot pretty early in life.

As for middle child Wakko, the goofy Harpo to Yakko's hyped-up wisecracking Groucho, he's the physical comedian of the troupe, an old-fashioned clown with a burlesque streak. Vocalized by Roger Rabbit's Jess Harnell as a dead-ringer for Ringo Starr, Wakko gets the crude-to-gross humor (fart and belch jokes, eating jokes, bathroom jokes) and his character design is the most openly comical: backwards cap, oversized jersey, and that time-honored cartoon badge of the slightly dopey flake, a floppy tongue. He's also the one with the most mutable form, capable of flying by flapping his arms, stretching his tongue twenty feet, or having his head jacked up to roof height by using his tail as a jackhandle. Just as it's dangerous to assume Dot's cute surface is her whole self, though, it'd be foolish to suppose Wakko less formidable than his quicker siblings. He's a natural force, with a literally explosive temper, and is the Warners' master of the giant mallet. His ever-present sack is apparently a pocket universe that can hold entire rooms, and he has the superhuman appetite of a mythological monster, always hungry and capable of eating anything in vast quantities (including furniture, metal and rocks). Wakko's a nifty balance to his older brother, simple where Yakko's sharp, a child of slapstick and silent comedy instead of the pun, double-entendre and stiletto comeback. He's also the true music lover of the trio; they all play the piano, but Wakko is always first to the keyboard and has been seen playing at home for his own enjoyment. (Another resemblance to Harpo Marx, maybe, suggesting a sensitive heart under the buffoon exterior.)

While the Warner siblings are the stars of *Animaniacs* - they have the lion's share of stories, sing all the segments' themes and get constant cameos - mention should be made of their co-stars. The most often seen, alongside the Warners, are their own supporting cast: Thaddeus Plotz, WB's rotund and greedy CEO; Dr. Otto Scratchansniff, studio psychiatrist; and his assistant, Hello Nurse.

Plotz, the Warners' uptight and temperamental boss, is their chief villain and favorite target. Plotz can't follow the sibs' chaotic illogic and dreads paying the bills their havoc causes; his reaction to them is more bewildered terror than hate. Thus, while he'll take any opportunity to bully them, he turns to jello when forced to deal with them directly, and generally delegates Warner management to Dr. Scratchansniff. That's to the Warners' advantage, since Scratchy, as they call him, is actually a sympathetic character. While he sincerely believes that psychiatric help will "dezanitize" the siblings and is determined to keep them in therapy until they're cured, he regards them as being in his care, and will even cross Plotz to see them treated fairly. At times he even assumes a sort of foster-father role, taking them to the circus or the movies (if unintentionally). Outwardly the voice of reason and science, he's a secret romantic at heart. The Warners realize he's their ally, and while running him ragged at times never actually attack him as they do Plotz.

There's more old-fashioned toon sex appeal on *Animaniacs* than in any other daytime show I can think of. Characters go into delirious Tex takes anytime an especially dishy babe and/or hunk comes onscreen. The main object of admiration in the Warners' cartoons is Hello Nurse (that's her real name), a shapely blonde out of Preston Blair's "Red" mold, and Yakko and Wakko's #1 dreamgirl. The sight of her always causes a fit of howling and drooling before they throw themselves into her arms for a kiss, much to Dot's exasperation. (In *I'm Mad*, we even see a poster of her in their bedroom!) Miss Nurse, however, is a cool sister who takes such displays in stride.

Rounding out the *Animaniacs* cast are the stars of the other continuing segments: Pinky and the Brain, Slappy Squirrel, Chicken Boo, the Hip Hippos, the Goodfeathers, Rita and Runt, and Buttons and Mindy.

Buttons and Mindy: bottom of the list for every fan I know. Mindy, the uncontrollable four-year-old, is so grating even her mother can't be patient with her, and it's downright painful to watch poor battered Buttons the dog risk his neck to save the wayward baby, only to be punished for letting her get loose in the first place. Which is the plot every single time.

Rita and Runt: a homeless cat and dog on the road. Unexceptional characters, even with Broadway singing star Bernadette Peters providing the voice of slinky Rita.

Goodfeathers: the adventures of three streetwise pigeons. Has its moments - the best episode yet is a full-dress musical spoof of *West Side Story* - but it generally feels unfocused and one-dimensional.

Hip Hippos: the best episode is also a musical parody, the operatic "La Behemoth," but it's usually simplistic and annoying. Its only joke is the constant duel of cross-purposes between the fashionable hippos, determined to run with the international jet set, and their would-be defender, naturalist Gina Embryo, who stubbornly insists on treating them as fragile, endangered creatures of the wild.

Chicken Boo: the surreal tale of a six-foot-tall rooster who wants to be human. Also a one-joke series, but the joke is a lulu: time and again Boo dresses in clothes and achieves fame in some field of human endeavor, with all but one person blind to his birdness, until his disguise is stripped away and everyone sees him as he is. Dumb laugh or pointed comment? Anyone's call; but wide-eyed, mute Boo, whose motives are a complete mystery, has the Zen innocence of a Chaplin hobo.

Pinky and the Brain: Some fans consider this the best segment of *Animaniacs*. This pair, a genetically altered, super-genius lab mouse (whose massively dignified baritone, by impressionist comic Maurice LaMarche, was inspired by Orson Welles), and his loopy partner, spend every night carrying out elaborate schemes to conquer the world. In a neat twist, it's frequently the brilliant Brain's fault that the plans fail, as his lofty mind overlooks some practical detail which was clear all along to down-to-earth Pinky.

Slappy Squirrel: Another fan favorite: a crotchety, semi-retired cartoon star of the '40's, created by series co-producer Sherri Stoner, who has scripted all her episodes and also provides her voice. In a welcome counter, along with *Darkwing Duck,* to the male near-monopoly on adult-and-child teams (has anyone ever tallied the number of father/son and uncle/nephew cartoon series?), Slappy's adventures generally include her cute adopted nephew, Skippy, whom she's schooling in classic toon technique. Though cynical, sarcastic and armed to the teeth, Slappy is basically good-hearted and genuinely fond of her nephew (voiced by producer Tom Ruegger's son Nathan), who in turn is her biggest fan.

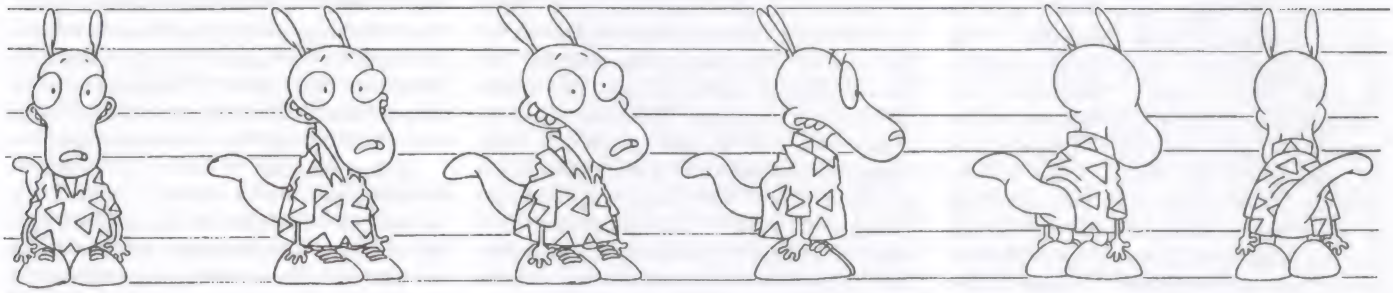
However varied their ensemble cast, though, the Warner siblings easily dominate. Right now they're about as lucky as toon kids get. They have everything going for them: the legacy of the past, the technical skill of the present, a staff with a keen desire to make classic cartoons...and the not inconsiderable clout of WB's Marketing Division. Even given the fixed episode count of *Animaniacs*, this combination will probably see to it that we see the Warner Brothers (and sister's) faces for years to come. Now all they need is a new contract specifying no more sixty-year lockups...

Paula O'Keefe is a Maryland-based writer and a good sport. She gladly took up publisher Pat Duquette's challenge to write about *Animaniacs* when she unsuspectingly visited the ANIMATO! table at a recent Chiller Con.



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ROCKO'S MODERN LIFE:
First Season Episode Guide



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As his second season begins, review his debut in this episode guide

By Matthew Hasson

Welcome to *Rocko's Modern Life*. If you are over 25 and are already living on your own, this show may bring back memories of your first apartment, your first entry level job, and all the trials and tribulations that went along with them. If you are younger than Rocko, then this will be a primer of things to come, And if you're lucky, you won't be flattened by steamrollers, sucked up by a vacuum cleaner or have your eyes pulled out of their sockets.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

ROCKO - A young wallaby who has just entered the 9 to 5 working world. Still like a kid in many ways, he is learning about life in the "school of hard knocks" (he gets knocked around one way or another in every episode). Because of his diminutive size, people call him "kid" or "kangaroo boy."

SPUNKY - Rocko's dog. Somewhat low on the intelligence scale, Spunky has a habit of eating all kinds of disgusting and potentially lethal objects. Only the viewer is aware of this because he usually does it when Rocko is not looking.

HEFFER - A 500-pound steer who is Rocko's best friend. Unemployed and still living with his parents, he spends most of his time at Rocko's house mooching food.

THE BIGHEADS - A middle aged married couple who live next door to Rocko. Ed Bighead is a mean old toad who can't stand having Rocko for a neighbor because Spunky is always digging in his prize garden. Bev Bighead is his sexually unfullfilled wife with a voice like Harvey Fierstein.

FILBERT - A bespectacled nerd who at times is either an old friend of Rocko's, or a stranger behind a service desk depending on which episode you're watching. His voice is an imitation of Woody Allen.

CREDITS

Created and produced by Joe Murray (series Director). Voices: Carlos Alazraqui as Rocko, Tom Kenny as Heffer, Charlie Adler as Ed and Bev Bighead, "Mr. Lawrence" as Filbert." Miscellaneous voices: Charlie Adler, Linda Wallen and "Mr. Lawrence." Music: Pat Irwin. Music recorded by Robert Fitzsimons. Theme: Sarah Frost-Goetz.

EPISODE GUIDE

I compiled this guide by watching the series myself and cataloging it on tape. However, I did not catch the series from the beginning so I am not sure of the exact order of shows. I have tried to keep the same pairs of episodes from each show listed together, but some of them I lost track of since I joined the series in the middle of it's run. In any case, they are all here. According to Dave Mackey in issue 28's *Mackey Report*, the premiere episode contained a "phone sex gag," so that would be CANNED. There is a certain order to these because some stories make reference to earlier ones.

There are 13 episodes of *Rocko*, each containing 2 cartoons. For simplicity sake I'm defining the individual cartoons as "episodes."

I'll go by the old dependable 4-star rating system here: **** = excellent, *** = pretty good, ** = has it's moments, and * = so-so.

Some episodes have funny gags that go by too fast, so I list them under FREEZE FRAMERS for those who like to tape it on the VCR. The soundtrack also has a lot of interesting musical references which I have listed under MUSICAL CUES.

TRASH-O-MADNESS ***

Rocko has just a few minutes to clear the entire house of trash before the garbage truck leaves. The only catch is he must get past Earl, a vicious pit bull who lives in one of the trash cans. Spunky also complicates things by getting caught in the trash compactor.

This looks like it might be the pilot episode, so I thought I would list it first. It carries a separate set of credits from the rest of the show with Joe Murray co-credited on story, direction and layout. The animation is a little rougher and cruder, with more of a "rubbery" quality than later episodes. Character design is inconsistent. In fact, the opening scene with Rocko asleep in bed hardly looks like him at all.

NOTE: Although Earl the bulldog appears in the show's opening titles, this is the only episode to feature him.

FREEZE FRAMERS: A portrait of Rocko's family shows his mother with a Marge Simpson hairdo.

A SUCKER FOR THE SUCK-O-MATIC ****

Rocko is brainwashed by an inf-o-mercial into purchasing the world's most powerful vacuum cleaner. The Suck-O-Matic soon acquired a mind of it's own and transforms into a giant sucking machine from an old Mighty Mouse cartoon. Ultimately it consumes the entire house and everything in it including Rocko. The real point of this story is how many different ways can you work the word "suck" into a script? Best line: "I must cease this senseless sucking!"

FREEZE FRAMERS: Look for the illustration of the "dog neutering feature" on the machine's control panel. This is a good episode to view still-frame just to see all the hundreds of

objects disappearing into the vacuum, since they are too numerous to list.

CANNED ****

Rocko gets fired from his job at the comic book store, and after considering various job openings (including that of phone sex operator) he takes a job working for Mr. Bighead at the Conglom-O Corporation. Mr. Bighead sees this as an opportunity to get rid of Rocko permanently, and uses him as a test subject for dangerous products. All of these backfire on Mr. Bighead of course, and Rocko is soon unemployed again. He eventually gets a job at a new comics store.

FREEZE FRAMERS: one of the products in the testing room is the "jumper jock," a jock strap attached to battery cables (ouch!). Spunky has a funny scene where he recycles his own drool.

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE ***

Heffer talks Rocko into lending him money to attend the O-Town Carnival, located on the site of a sewage treatment plant. The manager of the carnival is Slippy the Slug, who appears at every game booth ready to separate Rocko from his money. Highlight of the carnival is the Nosebleed Rollercoaster, with such a steep downgrade that the force of the wind peels Heffer's face right off of his skull.

SAND IN YOUR NAVEL ****

It is the hottest day of the year and Rocko is sweating buckets. He tries making his own air conditioner by placing a block of ice in front of a fan, but to no avail. He decides to spend a day at the beach, and as soon as he leaves the room Spunky drinks a bucket of wallaby sweat. When they get to the beach, Rocko somehow winds up between the cleavage of an enormous hippo lady ("How DARE You ! ! ! !"). He then must disrobe and cross a nude beach to rescue Spunky who gets kidnapped by a pelican. Special appearance by the Nickelodeon censor who gives Rocko a black square to cover his non-existant private parts.

ROCKO'S HAPPY SACK ****

Despite the sexual connotation of the title, this cartoon is about grocery shopping. Rocko's cupboard is bare and he has only $3.00 to his name. The only food he can afford is at a super sale at Heap O'Food Supermarket, but the sale ends in less than 15 minutes. Rocko must find a parking spot, do all his shopping and search for his missing dog in the space of 12 minutes, so you could say this cartoon takes place in "real time." The reason Spunky is missing is because he wanders into the meat department and gets packaged in cellophane. Another shopper picks him up and Rocko tries to convince him that it's wrong to eat dog meat, but that's exactly what the other shopper wants.

LEAP FROGS ****

The romance has gone out of the Bighead's marriage, and Mrs. Bighead decides to make her husband jealous by having an affair with an unwilling Rocko. She lures him into her house to fix the VCR, and makes him watch a documentary on toads mating. She then tries to slip him a aphrodisiac (real spanish flies) without success. Later, she inflates her eyeballs up to the size and shape of human breasts, shoves them in Rocko's face and makes him feel them ("why, yes . . . they're so soft and . . . . veiny"). Finally Mr. Bighead walks in to find his wife kissing Rocko. Instead of jealousy and outrage, he expresses sympathy for Rocko's ordeal of seeing Bev in her bathrobe. When Ed and Bev make up in the end, they engage in what can only be described as a toad version of oral sex.

MUSICAL CUES: As Mrs. Bighead approaches Rocko, we hear some of Paul Simon's soundtrack music from *The Graduate*, on which this cartoon is loosely based.

CLASSIC CARTOON CUES: When Mr. Bighead walks in, Rocko steals a "falling to pieces" take from Daffy Duck in *The Prize Pest* (1951).

BEDFELLOWS ****

To make financial ends meet, Heffer's parents rent his room out to vermin. Rather than live in a treehouse, he invites himself over to Rocko's (at 2:00 am), and becomes the roommate from Hell. He forces Rocko out of his own bed, keeps him awake all night with snoring, and uses up all the hot water. For the final straw, he turns the house into a nudist club while Rocko is away at work.

FREEZE FRAMERS: The nude live band is called "The Dangles."

FLU-IN-U-ENZA ****

Rocko goes to the hospital to get treatment for the flu, but winds up in the groping hands of Dr. Bendova, an escaped mental patient who performs a series of unnecessary invasive examinations. Later at home he is treated by the "Enchanted Upchucks," three Robert Crumb-like characters who emerge from the toilet and are shaped like pieces of undigested food. Lots of gross elements here, with mucous and vomit jokes aplenty.

MUSICAL CUES: Listen for a brief snatch of Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda Da-Vida" when the Upchucks mix up their hot sauce remedy.

LOVE SPANKED ****

Rocko is madly in love with the girl next door, but she doesn't even know he exists. To top it off, she already has a boyfriend. To get Rocko's mind off this seemingly unattainable quarry, Heffer places a personal ad in Rocko's name in the local paper, and sets him up with a whole slew of disasterous blind dates. When this fails, he enters Rocko in a TV dating show with similar results. The real problem seems to be that none of Rocko's dates are female wallabies. Some funny incidental gags: Rocko absent-mindedly rips the scalp off Spunky's head, and eats it (Spunky is back to normal in the next shot). Spunky himself eats a whole cactus, needles and all.

WHO'S FOR DINNER ? ****

Heffer invites Rocko to dinner at his parent's house. It turns out Heffer lives with a family of wolves who never told him he was adopted, and Rocko makes the mistake of mentioning this out loud. Heffer is shocked and dejected, as it never occured to him that wolves and cattle are different species. He then embarks on a search for his real parents. He eventually discovers his bovine father is a philandering "deadbeat dad" who has fathered numerous illegitimate children ("And they all look like you . . . . . UGLY !") Meanwhile, his adoptive family tries to track him down by placing his picture on milk cartons, but he is already on EVERY milk carton.

NOTE: The Wolfe family was introduced in *Bedfellows* where Rocko briefly met Heffer's father, but apparently didn't notice he was a wolf. Perhaps Nickelodeon is showing these out of sequence. Particularly amusing is the manner in which they feed their toothless grandfather: they regurgitate and spit the food out on his plate. This isn't just to be gross, it's the way real wolves feed their pups.

CLEAN LOVIN' **

Spunky develops an unusual affection for a dirty old mop. Rocko decides to take Spunky to a pet psychologist when he catches him in an unnatural act with it. The doctor decides that it is the mop which needs treatment and locks himself in his office with it "for examination." At first, Spunky is heartbroken over losing his "girlfriend," but soon falls in love with something normal: a fire hydrant. Some odd sound effects are utilized here: A squeaking toy is used to represent off-screen sexual activity, and when the sun pops up in the sky, there is a sound effect of what sounds like someone shouting "smeg!" (Any *Red Dwarf* fans out there?)

UNBALANCED LOAD ***

Rocko, like most young bachelors, waits until every last bit of clothing he owns is a stinking mess before making a trip to the laundromat. Once there, he must deal with Spunky getting trapped in a machine (twice), stubborn bill changing machines, and the laundry gremlins who steal his "lucky shirt." In addition to this, he gets beaten up by the hippo lady (a running joke in the series), dragged through the city streets by a runaway washing machine and squashed by a steamroller. All this after he comments "Blimey, these places are boring."

NO PAIN, NO GAIN ***

Rocko and Heffer get complimentary passes to the Chameleon Bros. exclusive health club. Heffer spends more time eating there than

exercising, and gains another 200 pounds in the process. Rocko is so out of shape that he winds up the loser in several violent encounters with exercise machines. Special guest voice appearance by diet guru Richard Simmons as an aerobics instructor who uses Rocko as a basketball.

KEEPING UP WITH THE BIGHEADS **

Mr. Bighead considers Rocko's house to be an eyesore of the neighborhood and arranges for a building inspector to condemn it. Rocko has only a few hours to get the place up to neighborhood standards or face eviction. Heffer the Steer helps out with the landscaping by providing fertilizer in his own special way ("... you got the sports page?").

FREEZE FRAMERS: A brief glimpse of the junk in Rocko's garage reveals the Suck-O-Matic vacuum (now back to it's original size) and the remains of Norman Bates' mother.

SKID MARKS ****

Rocko must endure a driver re-education program at the Department-O-Motor Vehicles after being caught driving without a gas cap. For anyone who has spent a day at a DMV waiting in lines, this will be familiar territory. As part of the course, Rocko views a driver's ed film hosted by a clown character who looks and sounds an awful lot like Roger Rabbit. Filbert the turtle is behind one of the windows, but in this cartoon he and Rocko act as if they don't know each other. He addresses Rocko as "Hey you."

MUSICAL CUES: A guitar riff from Jimi Hendrix's "Red House" can be heard as Rocko approaches the DMV building.

JET SCREAM ****

Rocko attempts to cure Heffer of his fear of flying by taking him on a plane trip to Las Vegas. A hilarious series of air travel gags follow, mostly at Rocko's expense. He causes the plane to go into a nosedive when he disobeys the "do not throw towels in toilet" sign and almost gets sucked down the toilet as well.

FREEZE FRAMERS: check out the different personas Rocko assumes while listening to the different music programs on the headsets: he becomes Beethoven on the classical channel, Elvis on the 50's channel and a Rasta Rocko on the reggae channel. Some of the sound effects used in this episode are from *Star Trek*. Does the plane crash? How would you expect this cartoon to end?

WHO GIVES A BUCK ? ***

Rocko receives his very first credit card and goes to the O-Town Mall to buy a new dog bowl for Spunky. The Mall has an automated information kiosk with a button in the shape of an eyeball. A recording says "poke my eye, please," and responds "ouch!" when Rocko complies (yet another in the ongoing series of eyeball gags). Rocko soon learns the pitfalls of plastic when he charges up tons of merchandise he can't afford. Heffer tells him not to worry: "..you didn't buy it - you charged it!"

SPITBALLS ***

Rocko and Heffer attend a baseball game with the hope of catching a foul ball and getting their favorite baseball star's autograph. They accomplish both, but not without a few tribulations. They pay Slippy the scalper $50.00 for the worst seats in the park (on top of one of the light towers). Rocko gets hit in the head with a foul ball, but someone else catches it. Since it is "Jock Strap Day" at the park, everyone gets free jock straps which they wear on the outside of their clothes.

POPCORN PANDEMONIUM **

Rocko & Heffer's trip to the megaplex cinema offers some funny film spoofs in the form of previews. Rocko is continually mistaken for an usher because their uniforms are identical to his tacky blue shirt (the type you might see tourists in Florida wearing). Like most continuing cartoon characters, Rocko is assigned one article of clothing for the sake of consistency. This makes it easy to re-use animation from different episodes. He hardly ever wears pants, but if he loses his shirt, he instantly materializes a pair of jockey briefs.

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE WALLABY **

In a loose spoof of "City Slickers," Rocko and Heffer visit a cattle ranch owned by Rocko's uncle. The opening shot of the ranch is straight out of Tex Avery's *Dragalong Droopy*. Once there, Heffer joins the herd to find out how "real cattle" live, thus crossing the fuzzy line between "people" animals and "beasts." The funniest gag involves Heffer accidentally getting hooked up to a milking machine. The voice of Rocko's uncle sounds like the late Pat Buttram (of *Green Acres* and Disney's *Robin Hood* fame), but he is not mentioned in the credits. For those keeping track, this episode is usually paired with *Trash-O-Madness*.

CABIN FEVER **

The Bigheads travel to a remote mountain cabin only to find that Rocko and Heffer have already rented it. Rocko invites them to stay and Bev accepts, but Ed would rather go home than spend the weekend with "those two idiots." Later he has a shouting tantrum which causes an avalanche, trapping the four of them in the cabin. They then turn on the TV news to see coverage of the rescue team trying to dig them out. (The newscast depicts them with natural, realistic illustrations of a wallaby, steer and toads). Ed spends the rest of the story trying to escape on his own while the other three calmly await a rescue. He builds a homemade rocket with which he successfully escapes through the chimney, but winds up stranded on an island in the middle of the ocean with two idiot pelicans.

RINSE AND SPIT *

Filbert talks Rocko into volunteering to be his "test patient" for his final exam at dental school. Things get out of hand somewhat when he causes one of Rocko's teeth to detach, and grow into a gigantic monster mutant tooth with arms. It then grabs Rocko, busts out of the building and starts terrorizing the city like King Kong. Filbert eventually comes to the rescue by dressing up as the tooth fairy.

FREEZE FRAMERS: Some of the terrified citizens running past Filbert are secondary characters from earlier episodes.

POWER TRIP **

Rocko's boss (a smoldering old toad) leaves Rocko in charge of the comic store while he goes on a trip, tells him to hire an assistant, and warns him "not to touch the green button" in his office. After interviewing several weird applicants, Rocko hires Filbert to man the register while he goes up to "check on the office." He sits in the boss's chair, sees the green button, and of course presses it. The chair starts to vibrate, and Rocko is suddenly transformed into a hideous evil clone of his toad boss. He then starts treating Filbert Even worse than his own boss treats him. It takes a personal appearance by "Really Really Big Man", the comic book hero, to return Rocko to normal.

TO HECK AND BACK ****

This macabre tale opens with a young chicken girl named Karen applying for a job at "Chokey Chicken" restaurants. The next thing we see is a package of chicken meat with Karen's name tag showing through the plastic being shipped to one of those restaurants where Rocko and Heffer are customers. While having lunch, Heffer starts choking and passes out on the floor. Rocko starts screaming for a doctor and even though all the other customers are obviously doctors, they pretend not to notice. While all this is going on, Heffer has an out-of-body experience. He finds himself facing "Peaches", master of eternal torment and lord of Heck. (Of all the things they get away with on Nickelodeon, you would think they would be able to say "Hell"). Heffer is found guilty of the sin of gluttony, and is forced to review all the times he has hurt others with his greedy appetite. Back in the world of the living, Rock attempts to remove the chicken bone from Heffer's windpipe and falls in, becoming trapped inside Heffer's lifeless body. Fortunately, this all turns out to be a bad dream, and Heffer wakes up in his front yard. Rocko is waiting there to drive

Continued on Page 68

Why's Mickey So Happy?



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A TRIBUTE TO TOONMASTER TYTLA

Animator Vladimir Tytla, known for his villians, is honored with an exhibition of his artwork

by Mike Lyons

Vladimir Tytla didn't just animate with a pencil and paper, he animated with his emotions. Tytla is most famous for creating the ominous Chernobog from *Fantasia's Night on Bald Mountain* sequence, but he also brought depth, feeling and a sense of personality to all his work. Today Tytla is known as "Animation's Michelangelo," (a name bestowed on him by another animation genius, Chuck Jones), and his work stands apart from others in the field.

"There's an indefinable star quality about certain performers, and I consider Tytla one of the great performers in animation," says animator and noted animation historian John Canemaker. "There's almost an electrical jolt of energy that comes on the screen when his stuff is up there. It truly comes to life in an uncanny way." This style became known as "personality animation," which Tytla didn't create, but was able to use to its fullest extent. "In a way, he recreated it and brought it to heights that had only been touched on before," says Canemaker, who also adds, "Tytla goes further, in that he could draw anything and that he could invest in his drawings this emotional quality."

Many of these drawings are currently on display at a retrospective entitled, "Vladimir Tytla: Master Animator," which is currently at the Katonah Museum of Art in Katonah, NY through December 31. John Canemaker is guest curator for the all encompassing retrospective, which includes original animation art from Tytla's more famous work at Disney, such as *Fantasia,*



Pinocchio and *Dumbo*, and his later, more obscure work at Terry Toons, Famous Studios, animation from television commercials and the film *The Incredible Mr. Limpet*. In addition to this, there will be four video displays of Tytla's work along with personal paintings, sketches and photos from the Tytla family collection.

Vladimir "Bill" Tytla had a fascination with art that began when he was a young boy growing up in Yonkers, New York. By the age of 16, Tytla was lettering title cards for Paramount Studios in New York City and three years later, was working at the small animation studio of Paul Terry. Always fascinated with the fine arts, Tytla continued to expand his artistic training by enrolling at New York's Art Students League and then, in 1929, he traveled to Paris with two friends, to study painting. It was on his return in 1930, that early glimpses of the perfectionist in Tytla broke through when he destroyed most of his work from Paris, (some of the surviving pieces are included in the retrospective).

Tytla returned to work at the Terry studios, but was incredibly unhappy. His friend and colleague, Art Babbitt, now working for Disney, lured Vladimir to the West Coast for a vacation. He made the trip in 1934 and was so impressed by the Disney Studio that he immediately took the "trial basis" job Disney offered him.

Tytla's knack for injecting his already unique talent with personality was evident in such early Disney work as *Mickey's Fire Brigade* (1935) and *The Brave Little Tailor* (1938). "Walt Disney's personal style of acting was more 'cartoony,' or cartoon acting," says Canemaker. "When Tytla got there, he was the first to really think of the psychological implications and the thought processes and how that impacts on how a character reacts."

This innate ability is especially evident in Tytla's animation on the Disney Studio's first "golden age" feature-length films. For *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, (1937) Tytla worked exclusively on the Dwarfs, making sure that the "seven little men" weren't just comic relief, but were in fact seven distinct personalities. "There's a scene with Grumpy that's one of the greatest scenes of "personality animation," says Canemaker. "He's kissed by Snow White and he changes, as if the kiss had gone through his entire body, warming him."

For his next assignment, Tytla took "personality animation" in another direction, when he animated the evil puppeteer, Stromboli in *Pinocchio* (1940). "Stromboli is an incredibly strong and powerful character," notes Canemaker. "One of the most three dimensional of Disney's villains. He could charm you and seem to be funny, but he's unpredictable."

Tytla's work took an even darker turn when he animated Chernobog in the *Night on Bald Mountain* sequence in *Fantasia* (1940). Many consider the scene one of animation's most powerful moments. Canemaker says one of the reasons for this is that Tytla was able to make Chernobog "human." "This gigantic, animal-like, inhuman creature is invested with human emotions and subtle changes that one wouldn't believe possible in animation."

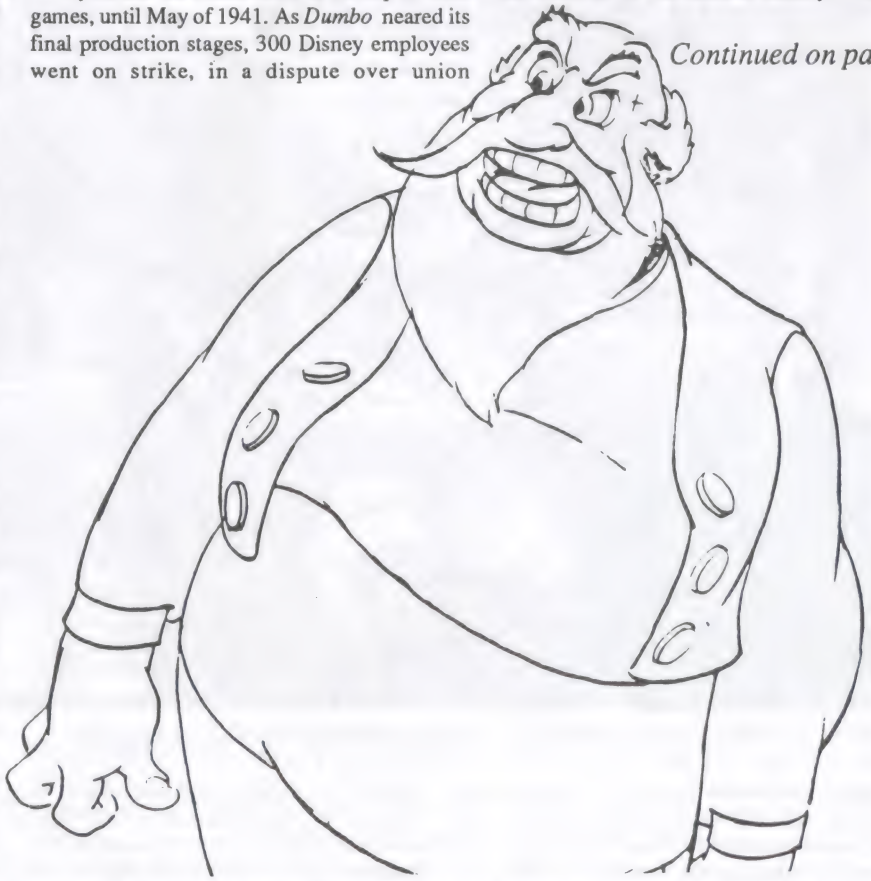
With Disney's next film, Tytla was also able to show his range as an artist. After two of Disney's most hideous villains, Tytla animated the title character in 1941's *Dumbo*. Using the actions and mannerisms of his then two-year-old son as a reference, Tytla animated the floppy-eared elephant with the personality of a human baby. His work moved audiences again, this time to tears, with such scenes as Dumbo being gently caressed by his mother's trunk.

Tytla and the studio were at the top of their games, until May of 1941. As *Dumbo* neared its final production stages, 300 Disney employees went on strike, in a dispute over union representation. Vladimir Tytla joined the stike out of sympathy for his co-workers, and this move would be the beginning of the end for him at the studio.

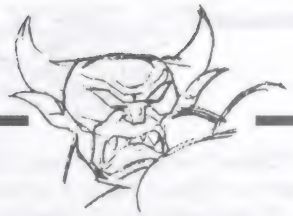
When Tytla returned to work in 1943, the animator got what many today would call "bad vibes." He was tormented by many real and imagined "demons," and in February of 1943, Vladimir Tytla would do something he would regret the rest of his life, resign from the Disney Studio. To this day, many insist that he could have stayed. Even Walt Disney, who took the strike very personally, didn't seem to hold a grudge, and when Tytla came back to visit the studio in 1954, even posed for a picture with him, (the photo, which is signed, "To Bill. With all best wishes, Walt," is also part of the retrospective).

After leaving Disney, Tytla went back to the East Coast and back to Terry-Toons, but then moved on to Paramount/Famous Studios in 1944. Even though he was unhappy at both studios, he was still able to bring a certain depth to some of his work as he had done at Disney. "There are

Continued on page 69



Stromboli was another great creation from Bill Tytla. © Walt Disney Productions



ALL THE POWERS OF HELL

A Survey of Truly Horrible Disney Animation

By Jim Fanning

This year's video release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* with its vividly terrifying characterization of the wicked Queen, was a wake-up call to those who still stereotype Disney animation as mere sweetness-and light. Truth is, Disney has often made potent use of horror as a major element in animated storytelling.

The trappings of horror have been part of Disney's animated vocabulary from the start. Some early Disney cartoons, such as *Alice's Spooky Adventure* (1924), were liberally laced with lightly treated elements of scary stories. But the first meaningful use of horror in early Disney animation came in 1929 with the historically and artistically significant *Skeleton Dance*.

The first of Disney's experimental Silly Symphony cartoons, *Skeleton Dance* is set in a midnight-shrouded graveyard, a decidedly creepy setting made all the more atmospheric by the somber gray tones of pre-Technicolor black and white. *Skeleton Dance* was animated almost singlehandedly by virtuoso animator Ub Iwerks, a feat made all the more remarkable by the complexities of the short; most of the cartoon is comprised of multi-boned skeletons performing a deathly dance quite intricate by that slapdash era's standards. Although humorous in nature, *Skeleton Dance* is macabre enough that some exhibitors were reluctant to play the cartoon, calling it "too gruesome." But the cartoon proved popular with audiences, successfully launching the Silly Symphonies.

Because the Silly Symphonies were never as widely seen as the phenomenally popular Mickey Mouse cartoons (at least until 1933's megahit *Three Little Pigs*), Disney reused Iwerks' animation of the skeletons' jig in *Haunted House* (1929). Like most of the early Mickeys, *Haunted House* has little story, basically being a series of gags centering on Mickey's exploration of (what else?) a haunted house. The gloomy old mansion is occupied by some very musical ghoulies who force the cowering Mickey to play the organ for their reverie.

The early 1930's were the heyday of the Universal horror pictures (e . g . , *D r a c u l a , Frankenstein*), and as Disney regularly starred his Mouse in spoofs of hit films, Mickey appeared in *The Mad Doctor* . Film historian Leonard Maltin calls this 1933 short a "miniature horror film" that is a "chilling and amazingly atmospheric cartoon." Mickey's attempts to rescue Pluto from the bizarre experiments conducted in a creepy castle result in Mickey himself becoming an unwilling guinea pig. This nightmarish cartoon is so unusually (if comically) gruesome, a widely-spread rumor sprang up in the 1970's that Disney had permanently withdrawn *The Mad Doctor* from distribution. (Oddly enough *The Mad Doctor*, though protected by copyright, was featured on a recent unauthorized, non-Disney video collection Disney itself has presented the scary short on it laserdisc collection of black-and-white Micke Mouse cartoons).



By the end of Snow White, it looked as if evil had won! ©The Walt Disney Company



Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Disney's first feature, brought animation — and animated horror — to a new level of expertise. In *Snow White* , Walt Disney combined the artistry of animation with his grasp of filmmaking technique to produce some of the most effective, emotionally affecting horror ever put on the screen.

As early as 1934, Disney defined *Snow White's* source of horror, the evil Queen: "Her beauty is sinister, mature...She becomes ugly and menacing when scheming and mixing her poisons — Magic fluids transform her into an old witchlike hag..." Designed by Albert Hurter and Joe Grant, the Queen is an icy beauty chilled to a deadly degree by her cruelty. Lucille LaVerne, an actress who portrayed evil hags in such films as D.W. Griffith's silent classic *Orphans of the Storm* and the MGM version of *A Tale of Two Cities* , was the model and voice for the Queen-turned-crone; when no suitable vocal actor could be found, LaVerne turned out to be the perfect voice for the pre-hag Queen, as well.

Though Disney began development of *Snow White* by concentrating on the comical Dwarfs, he soon recognized the wicked monarch's jealousy as the driving force of the entire film. Consequently, the movie opens with the Queen (key animation by Art Babbitt) using her sorceress' powers to summon the slave in the Magic Mirror. The threat against Snow White is established, and when the Queen orders the murder of the innocent girl, she goes where no "cartoon" character had gone before.



Vintage newspaper ad for Sleeping Beauty during its roadshow engagements featuring a 70mm image and stereo sound.

But it is when the Queen learns that Snow White is still alive that the film truly enters the realm of horror. Sweeping down the stone staircase into her rat-infested, skeleton-strewn dungeon, the Queen enters her laboratory, domain of her black arts. In a series of dissolves, she mixes the ingredients (an old hag's cackle, the black of night, a scream of fright, etc.) for the vile potion that will magically disguise her as an old peddler woman. Then, in a masterful montage of color, images, effects and sound, the transformation is seen in horrifying detail, culminating in the ugly visage of the now-transmuted Queen (animated in this guise by Norm Ferguson).

After poisoning the famous apple (a skull briefly appears on the fruit as "a sign of what lies within"), the Queen departs on her murderous mission, pausing long enough to kick to pieces a skeleton of a man who had been grasping through prison bars for a pitcher of water just out of his reach. "Thirsty?" she cackles. "Have a drink!"

In England *Snow White* was branded with the equivalent of an R rating because of its horror scenes; no one under sixteen was admitted without an adult. In the United States, the film was also criticized by some as being excessively frightening, resulting in an aprophycal story that all 5,900 seats in Radio City Music Hall had to be reupholstered when too many youngsters wet their pants upon seeing the wicked Queen. Walt Disney later said, "I showed *Snow White* to my own two daughters when they were small, and when they came to me later and said they wanted to play witch, I figured it was all right to let the other kids see the film."



Walt Disney saw *Fantasia* as the pinnacle of the animated art form, and its *Night on Bald Mountain* sequence is considered by many as one of the most powerful pieces of animation ever produced. It is certainly one of the best examples of horror in animation; with this delineation of a dark celebration of evil, Disney was pushing the horror envelope farther than he — or anyone for that matter — had pushed it before. "We have done cartoon and comic bats and cats and we have used graves and spooks from graves," said Disney at a *Fantasia* story conference. "In this thing we are attempting to do something bigger than we are able to handle, to tell the truth. We want to go beyond these obvious things we have done."

With *Bald Mountain* , Disney moved from spooky symbols to the very incarnation of evil itself. To the spine-tingling music of Moussorgsky's famous composition, Chernobog, the Black God, appears out of the peak of Bald Mountain to direct the damned in a perverse dance of wickedness. "The demon...was [Albert Hurter's] idea," story director Dick Huemer later revealed. "A simple pencil sketch showing the demon up there unfolding his wings suggested the whole thing to us."

Illustrator Kay Nielsen designed the character as a massive evil-eyed devil, and Vladimir "Bill" Tytla, an animator of unparalleled power, was hand picked by Disney as the one artist who could handle Chernobog. "I could relate immediately to the character," Tytla later said. "I'm Ukrainian...[and] Ukrainian folklore is based on Chernobog. Moussorgsky used terms I could understand."

Horror star Bela Lugosi was filmed acting out Chernobog's actions, but Tytla rejected Lugosi's performance. Instead, he enlisted skinny sequence director Wilfred Jackson to perform as the muscular devil under his direction. The result is a masterfully animated depiction of pure evil unsurpassed by anything on the screen before or since.

The next feature to incorporate horror balanced the terror with humor. An adaptation of Washington Irving's American literary classic, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* from *Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949), boasts one of Disney's wildest, funniest — and scariest — sequences, as the superstitious school teacher Ichabod Crane attempts to flee from the bloodthirsty Headless Horseman. As portrayed by directing animator Woolie Reitherman, the Horseman is a frightening spectre under the harvest moon. Clad in midnight black with a crimson-lined cloak outlining his formidable figure, the Horseman carries a glowing, grinning jack-o-lantern under his arm; in his hand, he wields a sword in hopes of finding a head — like Ichabod's — to replace his own missing noggin.

Some of the creepiest Disney cartooning is among the least seen. *The Great Cat Family* was a 1956 episode of the *Disneyland* TV series. In tracing the history of the domestic feline, new animation produced especially for this program illustrates the dark time in human history when superstition and ignorant suspicion could brand anyone as a witch — including the pet cat. This evocative sequence utilizes creeping shadows, dark nights, half-closed shutters (and a clip of a spooky sky straight from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow)* to tell of a frightened old crone who becomes convinced that her cat — a creature of the night, after all — is a demon. The poor cat is pursued by a mob of angry, torch-bearing villagers worthy of a good *Frankenstein* movie.

The Great Cat Family was directed by Clyde Geronimi, who was supervising director of *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), the Disney feature in production at the same time. *Sleeping Beauty's* horror is supplied by the evil fairy, Maleficent, whose imposing presence dominates the film. Bearing little resemblance to the original fairy tale's elderly figure, Maleficent is a creature of aristocratic beauty (despite her green skin). Designed and primarily animated by Marc Davis (later the creator of many of the horrors in Disneyland's Haunted Mansion), Maleficent is, as Davis put it, a "giant vampire bat," intended to inspire fear. Davis was inspired by an illustration in a Czechoslovakian art book to experiment with flamelike shapes and triangular areas of color. Maleficent's headdress is modeled on goat horns and the black material framing her face is based on bat wings.

It is in the climactic fight with Prince Philip that the evil enchantress bursts forth in fiendish fury, transforming herself into a stories-high, purple-and-black dragon with the words "Now shall you deal with me, O Prince — and all the powers of hell!" "Mr. Disney has pepped up *Sleeping Beauty* with a chase and a dragon fight that makes a patty-cake party of Snow White's famous flight through the woods," wrote Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times*. "Mr. Disney here reaches the apex of his build-up of animated horror." Sequence director Woolie Reitherman gave an extra kick to the dragon-prince duel, later explaining "we took the approach that we were going to kill that damn prince." It's only the

Continued on Page 69

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1. What is the title of the first "Silly Symphony?"
2. Who dognaps Pluto in *The Mad Doctor* (1933)?
3. How many ghosts do Mickey, Donald, and Goofy take on in *Lonesome Ghosts* (1937)?
4. What song ends the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence in *Fantasia ?*
5. Who wrote *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* ?
6. Who narrates the Disney version?
7. What villain opposes Merlin in *The Sword and the Stone* ?
8. Name the evil fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*.
9. Name the three good fairies.
10. In *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1983), who plays Marley's ghost?
11. Describe the monster Bugs Bunny meets in *Hair Raising Hare* (1946).
12. What name was the monster later given?
13. In *Water Water Every Hare* (1952), what does the mad scientist want from Bugs Bunny?
14. What does Witch Hazel turn into at the end of *Bewitched Bunny* (1954)?
15. What does Sylvester save Porky Pig from in *Scaredy Cat* (1954)?
16. How does Sylvester lose his last life in *Satan's Waitin* ' (1954)?
17. The title of *Transylvania* 6-5000 (1963) is a play on what tune recorded by the Glen Miller Orchestra?
18. *The Duxorcist* (1987) was included in what full-length animated feature?
19. In *The Duxorcist* , what business are Daffy and Bugs in?
20. Who goes on "a little crusade against the undead?"
21. In Fleischer's *The Cobweb Hotel* , how does the female fly free the other flies?
22. Who do the initiators in *Bimbo's Initiation* (1931) turn out to be?
23. What do they continually ask Bimbo?
24. In Fleischer's *Snow White* (1933), who performs "St. James Infirmary?"
25. What does Koko turn into in Snow White?
26. What bandleader appears in *I'll be Glad When You're Dead You Rascal You* (1932)?
27. Who saves animals from mistreatment in *Be Human* (1936)?
28. What happens to the man who mistreats them?
29. What establishment is Betty Boop proprietor of in *I Heard* (1933)?
30. What do the ghosts in *I Heard* use for a baseball?
31. What was the title of the first Casper cartoon?
32. What does Casper save Dudley Duck from in *A Haunting We Will Go* (1949)?
33. What's the motto of the ghost school?
34. Who befriends Casper in *There's Good Boos Tonight* (1948)?
35. In *Ghost of the Town* (1952), Casper appears on what famous television variety show?
36. In *Casper Takes a Bow Wow* (1951), what does the Spookpreme Court find Casper guilty of?
37. Name Casper's spooky housemates in the television cartoons.
38. In the "Casper and the Angels" Saturday AM series, what is Minnie and Maxie's occupation?
39. What ghost joins Casper in the series?
40. What song does the ghost emcee in the Famous Studios short, *Boos in the Nite* (1950) invite the audience to sing?

MONSTER MATCH: FIND THE SATURDAY MORNING STAR EACH CLUE DESCRIBES.

41.	Lydia's haunting helper	a.	Adams Family
42.	Frankie and Howler	b.	Gruesomes
43.	Morticia and Gomez	c.	Drak Pack
44.	Lives with Count Kook	d.	Beetlejuice
45.	Ed Grimley favorite	e.	Ghoul School
46.	Sabrina sidekick	f.	Groovie Goolies
47.	seen with C.B. Bears	g.	Milton the Monster
48.	Wake Rattle and Roll	h.	Count Floyd
49.	Scooby-Doo special	i.	Monster Tales
50.	Flintstone friends	j.	Shake, Rattle, and Roll



ANSWERS:

1. *The Skeleton Dance*
2. Dr. XXX
3. four ghosts
4. "Ave Maria"
5. Washington Irving
6. Bing Crosby
7. Mad Madame Mim
8. Maleficent
9. Flora, Fauna and Merriwether
10. Goofy
11. hairy, orange and wears tennis shoes
12. Gossamer
13. Bugs' brain
14. a female bunny
15. homicidal mice
16. he's blown up while hiding in a bank vault
17. "Pennsylvania 6-5000"
18. *Daffy Duck's Quackbusters*
19. ghost busting
20. Daffy
21. with a razor blade
22. Betty Boop
23. "Wanna be a member?"
24. Cab Calloway
25. a ghost and a skeleton
26. Louis Armstrong
27. Grampy and his Animal Aid Society
28. He's forced to run on a treadmill which feeds the animals
29. Betty Boop's Tavern
30. a bomb
31. *The Friendly Ghost*
32. hunters
33. "Boo unto others as you would have others boo unto you."
34. Ferdie Fox
35. *The Ed Sullivan Show*
36. friendship
37. The Ghostly Trio
38. policewomen in the year 2179 A.D.
39. Hairy Scary
40. "Pack Up Your Troubles"
41. D. Beetlejuice
42. C. Drak Pack
43. A. Adams Family
44. G. Milton the Monster
45. H. Count Floyd
46. F. Groovie Goolies
47. J. Shake, Rattle and Roll
48. I. Monster Tales
49. E. Ghoul School
50. B. Gruesomes

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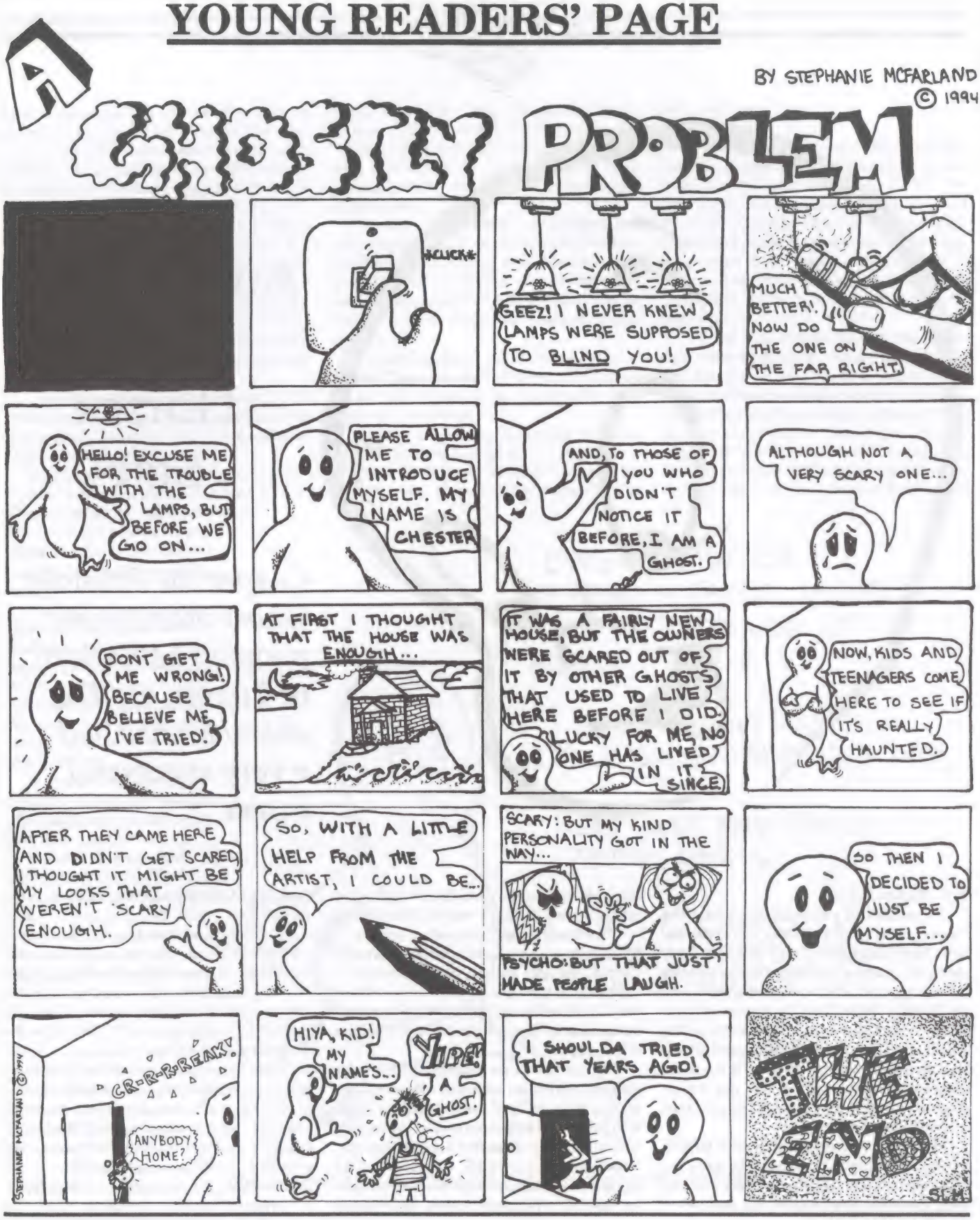
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YOUNG READERS' PAGE





Animation's Own Horror Star

Casper the Friendly Ghost didn't scare people like Karloff or Lugosi, but the character has had a very successful career

by G. Michael Dobbs

He sounds like a little kid, has a head like "Henry" of the comic strip fame, and a body that looks like a Dairy Queen cone. Not very likely characteristics for an animated star who is known for scaring people, albeit accidentally. But Casper the Friendly Ghost "lives" in a haunted house, hangs around with a variety of spirits and spooks, and has a body composed of translucent ectoplasm. He's the closet thing to a horror star in American theatrical animation, and is now due for re-discovery thanks to an up-coming live-action and animated motion picture.

His cartoons followed a fairly strict formula of Casper wanting to be accepted by someone, being rejected, and then earning their trust and love. The humor was based on the reactions of unsuspecting humans when first seeing a ghost whom the audience knew wouldn't hurt anyone.

That doesn't sound like much of premise on which to base a long-running series of cartoons. Casper, though, has prospered. Thanks to theatrical and television cartoons, a long-running comic book, and numerous merchandising deals, cartoondom's friendliest ghost is a multi-million dollar property.

The acceptance the character sought in his animated adventures may have sometimes been elusive, but in the "real" world Casper has indeed won friends and influenced people. He has been used as a recruiter of the Boy Scouts of America, a spokesman for UNICEF, the mascot of the Apollo 16 moon mission, a good-will ambassador for baseball's National League, the National Basketball Association and the American Dental Association.

Although the character has certainly been a very public figure, his origins are somewhat mysterious. No, not how he became a ghost, but just who created him. The second aspect of this cartoon controversy is that man who claimed he created him only received $175.00 for the character and the first story idea.

When I interviewed the late Joe Oriolo in the late Seventies, the veteran animator was emphatic in his claim that Famous Studios had withheld a promised merchandising contract. The general manager of Famous, Sam Buchwald, had promised Oriolo a ten percent share in all merchandising, but the contract never developed.

Oriolo had started at the Fleischer Studios in



1932 as an errand boy. An aspiring artist, he worked his way up through the ranks, first as an opaquer, then as an in-betweener and finally as an animator. Oriolo made the move to Florida with the studio in 1938, and returned to New York with the newly re-organized Famous Studios in 1944.

Oriolo said he had originally come up with an idea of a friendly ghost in the late Thirties and early Forties. He then worked with writer Seymour Reit (who had been employed at the Fleischer Studios in Florida) on a children's book featuring his character. The two men tried interesting publishers with the project, and, while they thought Grosset and Dunlop were interested, ultimately nothing came of their efforts.

The original design of Casper was slightly different than of the character with which many of us grew up. Casper had sort of a tail, and wore a little sailor-type hat.

The character got his name after hours of Reit and Oriolo bouncing names off of one another. "Casper," thanks to cartoonist H.T. Webster's popular Caspar Milquetoast comic strip feature, was thought by the pair to denote meekness.

Another version of the story surfaced when Oriolo died in 1985. The Associated Press reported his son Donald said that Oriolo "created Casper in 1944 to comfort his daughter because she was afraid of the dark." There's no mention of Reit's contributions.

It was in 1944 that Oriolo decided to approach his full-time employer, Famous Studios, with the Casper story.

"While we (Famous Studios) were in New York, King Features decided to take Popeye the Sailor back.," Oriolo recalled. "The contract had expired, and they wouldn't renew it with the Famous Studios. They (Famous) were looking for new characters.

"Let me tell you, I'm the only guy with the original contract. I have a contract signed in 1944 by Sam Buchwald as a one-shot deal. And he called me into his office one day, and I said, 'Look, if you're looking for a character, I've got a good little character which I have already developed.' And I have the original concept as a book prepared for, I think, Grosset and Dunlop at the time. They were going to buy the book. I decided that if it's a one-shot deal, then maybe the book would be more acceptable to the public if there was something up on the screen.

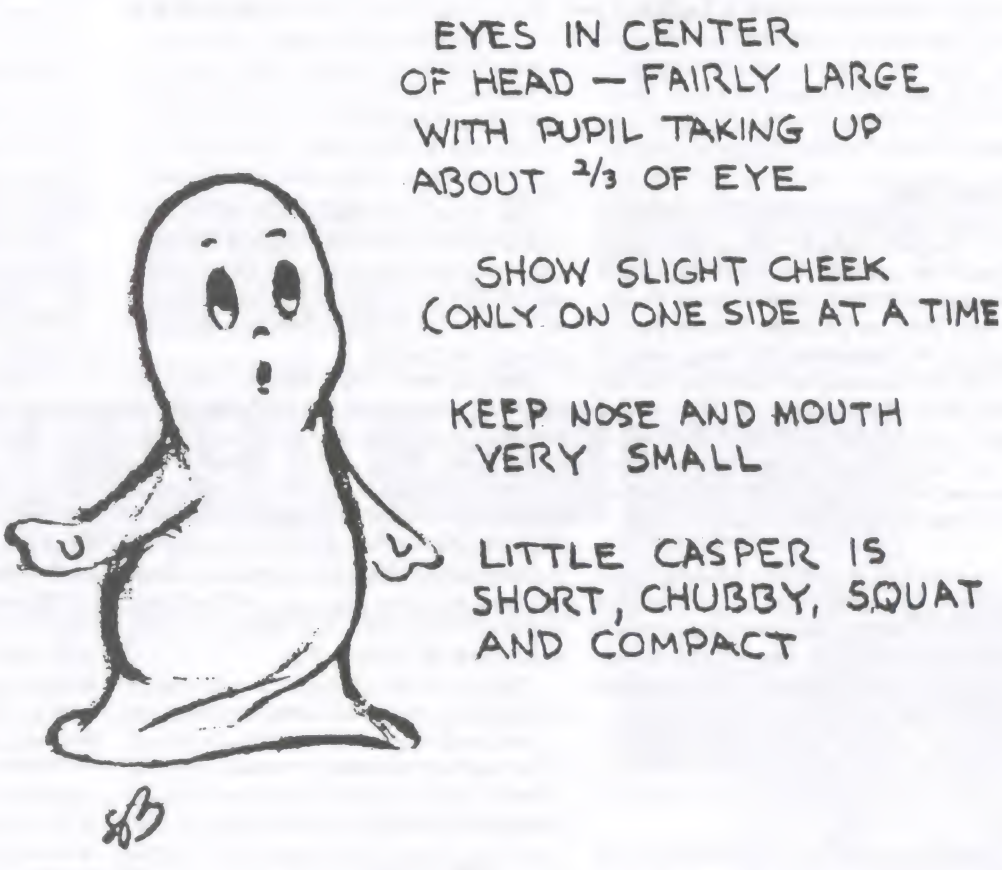
"I have a whole history of it, papers and everything else, and it's all in the hands of lawyers (to) this day. I'll be happy even if I get a 'crank' type of settlement. Anyone else who says they created Casper the Ghost I should hold them for libel for it. More people took credit for it than anything else."

Famous animator John Walworth designed the first Casper model sheet. Gone were both the hat and "tail." Casper looked like a chubby little white kid...very white.

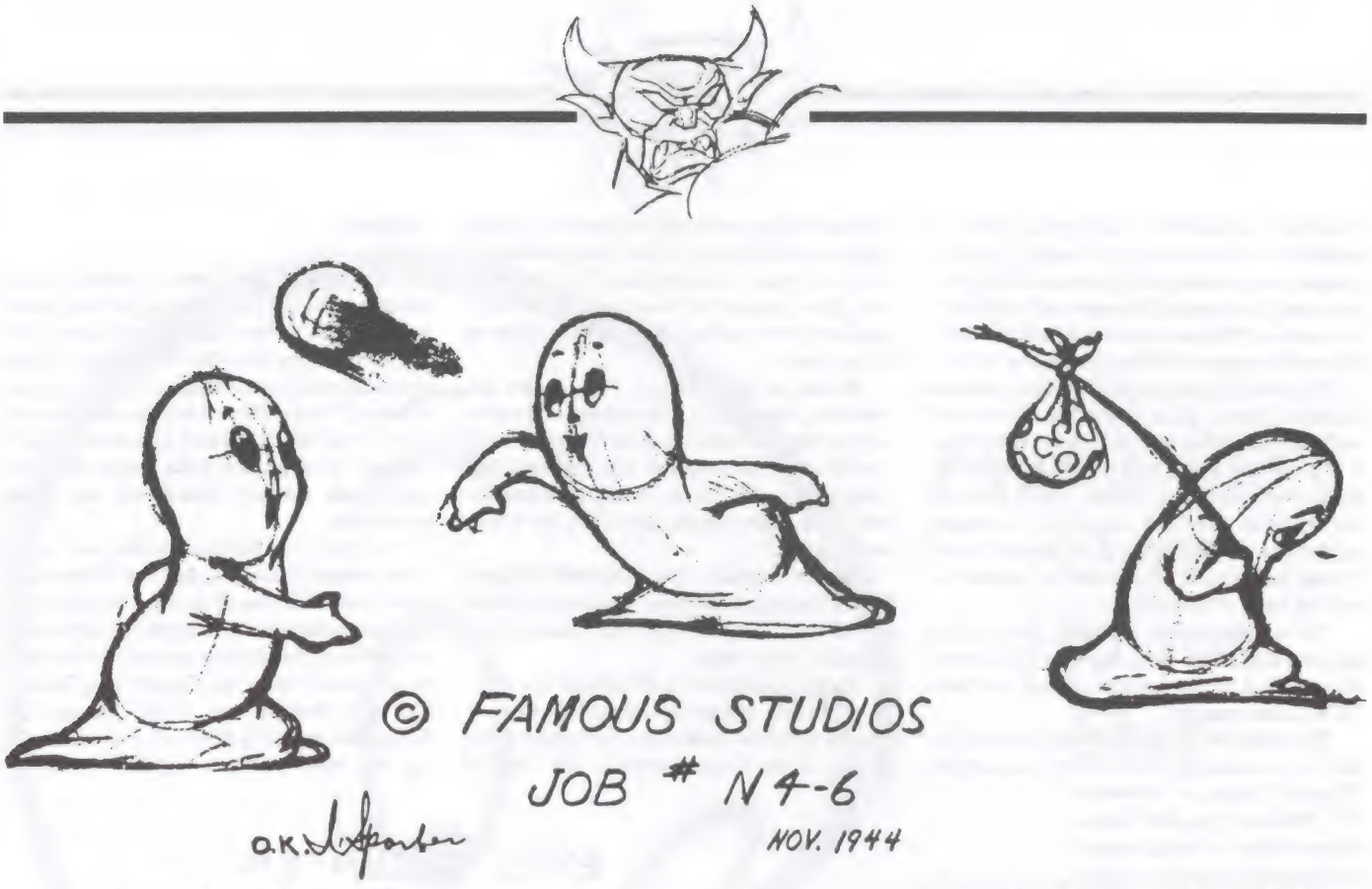
Further complicating the origins of Casper was a column written by animation veteran I. Klein in 1970. He wrote about his memory of the genesis of the *Casper* shorts in the *Top Cel* newsletter:

"One day when Famous (Cartoon) Studio was going strong, a story was bought from outside. It was called 'Casper the Friendly Ghost.' The story was sold by its author for less than $100.00 to a middleman (whose name it would not be fair to reveal) The middleman sold the story as a one-shot, seven-minute cartoon at a small profit to Famous. It was given to a story team who added gags, made the story board, and sent it into production.

"At that time Famous Studios was run by three partners (sad to say, they are all dead now.) Sam Buchwald, who of the three was the studio manager, summoned the story men into his office, and told them that this is a story conference to get one more story out of the 'Casper' idea. The story men were Jack Mercer, 'Mike' Meyers, Lars Bourne and myself (I. Klein). We were joined by the two other partners, Isadore Sparber and



Directions on how to draw Casper from John Walworth's original model sheet. © Harvey Comics



Seymour Kneitel.

"It may seem unbelievable now in view of the many 'Caspers' which were subsequently produced, that at this first story meeting we were almost convinced that 'Casper' was good for only one shot. But Sam Buchwald insisted that we keep at it. Well somehow, after many hours of talk-talk-talk, someone said something that had bounce and we bounced it around. This 'cracked the nut,' and we were on the move by the end of the day. There was enough of a line for a story team to get rolling on, and two of the men received this assignment."

The first Casper short, *The Friendly Ghost*, was part of the Noveltoons series which featured both one-shot cartoons and shorts with established Famous characters. The Casper character was introduced to theater patrons in the same time period as many of the other Famous characters. Lil Audrey was introduced in 1948 to replace Little Lulu; Herman and Katnip was brought to the screen in 1947; and Baby Huey was "born" in 1951.

Casper's initial offering was followed by two more one-shots; one in 1948 and one in 1949. Two Caspers were released in 1950, followed by five the next year. The ghost finally had his own series.

The success of Casper and his Famous colleagues finally gave the studio a recognizable style and approach to an audience. The animation was certainly proficient, the music was more than serviceable, and the stories were squarely aimed at the juvenile market.

Famous made the transition from the company's heritage as the Fleischer Studio producing cartoons for both adults and children to strictly catering for children. Famous joined both the Lantz organization and Terrytoons in competition for this same market. One could argue that what the Famous shorts may have lost in wider audience appeal and critical assessment, they made up in licensing deals...cold hard cash. And that is what Paramount Pictures certainly wanted from its animation unit.

This new batch of characters were owned solely by Paramount, and, for the first time since the merchandising success of *Gulliver's Travels*, Paramount had properties to interest potential licensees. Although Max Fleischer certainly had had popular successes with Betty Boop and an Academy Award nomination for Myron Waldman's *Hunky and Spunky*, his studio's greatest short subject successes were with brilliant adaptations of other's characters. Paramount never saw any merchandising money from either Popeye or Superman.

When the license lapsed on Little Lulu, it's significant the company decided to create their own "bad girl" character, rather than to seek an additional deal or license another comic strip character.

Of all of the new characters, Casper seemed to make the most lasting impression. He appeared in 54 theatrical cartoons from 1946 to 1959. Although nearly all of the Famous characters starred in their own comic book series thanks to a deal which was struck with Harvey Comics, Casper seemed to only have a rival in Richie Rich on the four-color pages for spin-off books.

For many adults, the appeal of Casper might seem to be a bit elusive. What did people see in these cartoons? Unlike the more rough-house Herman and Katnip shorts, the Casper cartoons were gentle. In an age of Barney the Dinosaur, however, their appeal shouldn't be too mystifying.

Children identified with the stories of Casper seeking and eventually finding friendship. From a moral stance, the Casper cartoons preached tolerance and understanding. Long-time Fleischer and Famous animator Myron Waldman has expressed his belief cartoons such as the Casper series with their reliance on a simple and



sentimental story make a greater impact on children than just slapstick. He feels that children will forget a gag before they forget a story, and the Casper cartoons were story-oriented. Considering Casper's popularity, he might be right.

In 1957, the Famous Studio sold its many of its properties and cartoons to Harvey Comics. The comic book company had a new animated credit sequence created for the shorts, and created a show which ran on ABC in the late Fifties and early Sixties. After their network run, the package was widely syndicated.

Casper returned to network television in 1979 on NBC with a half-hour show entitled *Casper and the Angels*. The Hanna-Barbera program featured Casper as the guardian ghost to several space police in the 21st Century! High concept, indeed. There were 26 installments produced to create a 13 episode series.

Today, many of the Casper cartoons can be found on various tape collections, some licensed and some public domain. MCA Universal Home Video is now marketing 16 volumes of Casper cartoons which retail at $9.98.

The current Casper television package is a horribly mutilated representation of the shorts. The producers have eliminated the opening and closing credits, and edit various shorts together. They have then recorded a new soundtrack featuring an un-inventive synthesizer score, and new voices saying the original dialogue.

Casper's Creator Has Been Forgotten

The late Joe Oriolo said to me that at first he wasn't too concerned about losing Casper because he thought "there would be more [characters]." Like many creative people, Oriolo believed lightning would hit twice.

While he never quite achieved a second brush with success the likes of Casper, he did certainly try harder. He purchased the rights to Felix the Cat, and produced a long-running syndicated cartoon series beginning in 1960. The low-budget series bore little resemblance to the classic silent cartoons, but had an odd charm all their own as Felix defeated the villainy of his repertory bad guys, The Professor and Rock Bottom with the help of his magic bag. Jack Mercer provided all the voices for the series, and recounted to me in an interview the difficulty of going from Felix's falsetto to the gravely tones of Rock Bottom.

Oriolo followed that series with *The Mighty Hercules*, 108 five-minute shorts which were packaged three shorts to a half-hour show. Oriolo was successful merchandising both shows, and continued his animation career by providing animation services for commercials. His company, for instance, produced the fondly remembered Popeye animation for the "I'm a Pepper, Too" ad campaign for Dr. Pepper. His last project was the Felix feature which didn't see much theatrical release in this country, but is easily seen on videotape. The Felix character has been re-introduced to younger readers through a new comic book series produced by Don Oriolo, Joe's son.

Despite his best efforts, Oriolo never did create another character which had the long-lasting appeal of Casper. In fact, the final indignity is that Oriolo's name has seldom been associated with the character. Animation studios were not in the habit of identifying creators on-screen. Since Oriolo sold his story out-right to Famous, the studio was under no obligation to acknowledge what he had done.

The era of television animation began to change the tradition of anonymity. Bob Clampett broke new ground when he worked his name into the theme song of his *Beany and Cecil* cartoons. Today, artists such as John Kricfalusi and Matt Groening are getting the credit they deserve as creators. Hopefully, no creator will have to experience what Joe Oriolo did with his sweet little ghost.

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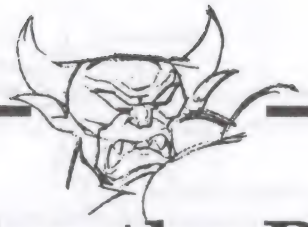
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Monsters Under the Bed

Bump in the Night brings model animation to network television



by Karl Cohen

How would you like to be given millions of dollars to create your own series for TV? Danger Productions in Brisbane has been doing just that with financial support from ABC-TV. For the past year Ken Pontac and David Bleiman have been producing and directing a 26 episode of a Saturday morning series called *Bump in the Night* with a staff of 80. It is a stop-motion animated half-hour series that stars creatures kids believe live under beds, in closets and in toilets. Since the network has ordered two seasons of the show and manufacturers are creating dolls, books, gift-wrap, bed sheets and other products, it appears everyone expects *Bump in the Night* to be a major hit. The series premiered Saturday, Sept. 10, on ABC-TV.

The show's strength comes from the delightfully zany imagination of its creators Pontac and Bleiman. Pontac says they have combined the coolness of *Ren and Stimpy* with images inspired by *Mad Magazine* and underground comic artist R. Crumb. He says the results are "visually great," and that scripts by M.K. Brown, Mark Zaslove, Jeremy Cushner and others are exceptional. The cutting edge stories are designed to appeal to both children and adults.

Pontac describes Mr. Bumpy as "the star of our show. He is the monster that lives under the bed. He is totally id motivated. He is the monster that grabs that last sock and eats it...He has no real manners, but he has a great love for his friends and a great lust for life." The character is green with giant eyes on stalks and bumps on his skin. Bumpy's co-stars are Squishy (Squishington) and Molly. David Bleiman describes Molly as "the little sister's comfort doll who is pals with Bumpy and Squishy. She used to be the little girl's favorite doll, but now the little girl pays more attention to her flashy cute dolls that are fully accessorized and have pink Corvettes, airplanes and things like that." Since she is old several of her body parts have been replaced and no longer match.

Squishy is the adorable friend of Mr. Bumpy. He is a blob of blue material with a big expressive face and no feet. His home in a toilet tank is clean and neat while Bumpy's place under the kid's bed is always a mess. ABC told Danger Productions that due to the location of Squishy's home he could be any color except brown. They made him blue after the color of liquids generally squirted on diapers and other absorbent materials in TV commercials.

Episode titles give some idea of what the audience can expect from the series. Among them are "Better Homes and Garbage," "Hide and Go Freak," "All You Need is Glove," "To Sleep, Perchance To Burp," "Gum Crazy," "I Dream of Silverfish," "Farewell To Arms" (Molly replaces her body parts with those from a gorilla, action toy robot, etc. and becomes a monster), "Adventures in Microbia," and "Not of This Boy's Room."

Parody is an element in the show that should attract adult viewers. For example, in the episode "Baby Jail" Mr. Bumpy is turned into a baby, and sentenced to time in the Big Crib. Adults should recognize this episode as a parody of a typical film noir prison movie. In "Sock It To Me," kids will learn about a creature most adults are familiar with - the sock monster. Mr. Bumpy turns out to be a "socaholic!!"

Danger Production is being paid to have fun, and it shows in both the shows and in the appearance of the studio. Ken Pontac's office is a big boy's fantasy room with shelves full of models and props from the show, samples of *Bump in the Night* merchandise, plus a news stand rack full of comic books. The fabrication department looks like the design department of a giant toy company. Around the corner in the staff's screening room/ lounge is a Nintendo game player hooked up to a projection TV system. Staff members have been known to relax playing *Clayfighter*, a popular game that was animated by Danger Productions while they were waiting to get the contract to do *Bump*.

Most of Danger Productions' 35,000 square foot facility is devoted to 25 shooting stages. Each has walls made of black fabric and a Mitchell 35mm camera. There is lots of lighting equipment and 4 computer controlled motion control camera systems that enable the camera to be moved smoothly with the aid of stepping motors.

The most important state-of-the-art tool used by the company is the video frame grabber. It stores each image the animator shoots so the animator can play back their work over and over to determine how far to move their character in the next frame of film. This system eliminates most reshoots by catching errors right away. The animator no longer has to wait for dailies to come back from the lab to see if everything they are doing is okay.

Each of the 18 animators has their own frame grabber. This results in each artist doing about 25 seconds of usable work a week. The reason the company has 25 stages and only 18 animators is a matter of economics. While one scene is being shot another set can be put in place by the camera department. That keeps the animators busy almost all the time.

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The sets range from a realistic full-sized bathroom and bedroom designed by an architect to some really wild fantasy images. A set for an episode with a giant robot action toy named Destructo features strange war-like things. It turns out the rockets are really crayons lined up to look evil. Other common objects from the toy box enhance this sinister set. On another stage a UFO was being set-up against a black sky. The odd shaped craft has sets of wheels that probably came off of airplane models.

Although this is an animated production, there is some live action footage incorporated in the show. The humans, Mr. Bumpy, Squishy and Molly live with are seen from time to time from below the waist just as maids and parents appeared in cartoons from the golden age of animation.

If the show sounds a bit wild for a network Saturday morning TV show, it is. This has resulted in a thick pile of letters from the network on how to keep the show within it's standards. Pontac says there appears to be tremendous pressure on the networks to single-handedly correct all the problems of society including bad parenting and bad schools.

Even though Danger Productions self-censors their scripts, there are lots of things they would like to do but can't. ABC's Broadcast Standards and Practice Department frequently sends them suggestions for changes and deletions. Pontac says they sometimes spot things with hidden meanings in scripts he wrote that he didn't know were there. They also watch closely for "dangerous and imitable" acts and "interpersonal violence." Little gestures like shaking a finger at someone is considered a violent act by the conservative watch-dog critics of TV who count each shake of a finger as a dangerous movement.

Another form of pressure comes from sponsors. For example the writers have to avoid showing certain disgusting things for fear food sponsors will be offended.

Network executives and BS&P approve their work at almost every level of production. The network approves the one page premise for each episode, the script outline, the script, the storyboard and finally a roughcut of the picture with a temporary sound mix. The roughcut and mix often become the final product unless the network asks for changes.

Early in 1993 ABC told Danger Productions they were going to do two seasons of show, plus the ABC bumpers for the Fall 1993 season to introduce the characters to the public. (Bumpers are the brief segments that tell kids "we will be right back after these commercials" and "and now back to the show.") Before work could begin a space large enough for the studio had to be located and turned into a studio plus all the equipment had to be obtained.

The company's staff is a mixture of well known artists and technicians and young people who are learning their trades on the job. Most of the animators and department heads have worked for Henry Selick's Skellington Productions on *Nightmare Before Christmas*, for Will Vinton in Portland, OR., for George Lucas' ILM, for Art Clokey on "Gumby" and/or for other well known companies. The company is proud of the professionals working for them, and also excited about the new faces working there. In one case, a driver/runner showed interest in working on the stage, and was promoted to a camera assistant. His brother is now a runner at the company.

Another new talent was discovered when Owen Klatte, the director of animation, met an amateur animator who was working at the Pier 39 Disney Store. Anthony Yau asked Klatte how he got his *Nightmare Before Christmas* jacket. Klatte gave Yau his card and suggested he send him a resume and reel. Yau turned out to be a talented sculptor. He is creating many of the 100's of models being used in the production. Yau says he is doing "incredible stuff."

The credits for the production include Patricia Rose Duignan joining Pontac and Bleiman as executive producers, Mark Zaslove co-producer and story editor, Chris Peterson director of Photography, Ginny "Scorchy" McSwain voice director, music by Jim Latham and Jeff Moss, Jim Cummings as the voice of Mr. Bumpy, Rob Paulsen as Squishy and Gail Matthius as Molly Coddle. The storyboard directors are Stephen Holman and Greg Garcia who work with several storyboard artists. Norm DeCarlo is the art director and the character supervisors are Bonita DeCarlo and Elise Robertson. The art department includes over 20 people who sculpt, make molds, design and fabricate armatures, etc. There is also a large staff of fabrication artists, a set decorator and assistant, more than 20 animators and an animation rigger. There is also a large post-production staff.

As for Ken Pontac and David Bleiman, it took these childhood friends 12 or 13 years to go from making of their first stop-motion clay film at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena to having Jennie Trias of ABC hire them to develop the series

(Oct., 1991). They acknowledge Art Clokey who saw their student film and who hired them to work on "The New Adventures of Gumby" as line-producer (Bleiman) and art director (Pontac) in 1987. They are also grateful to the Gumby artists who donated time to help create the Danger Team sample reel and to Tony Joanas of Lorimar who bought "The Danger Team" as a project for ABC where it became a prime-time pilot. Lorimar gave them the opportunity to prove they could produce TV shows. The pilot led to their doing their current production.

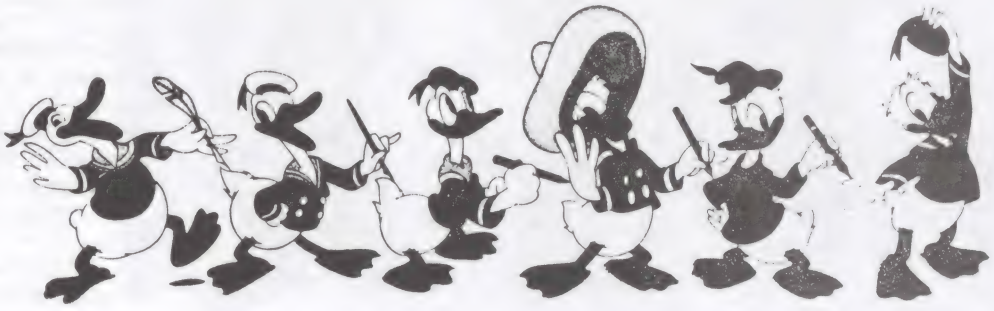


As for the company's future, Pontac hopes they get to produce at least 5 seasons of *Bump in the Night*, and that it becomes successful in TV syndication. By that point, he would like to be producing other shows, and Pontac and Bleiman are presently dreaming up ideas of what they might pitch the networks in the future.

Karl Cohen is the editor for the ASIFA- San Francisco newsletter, and frequently writes for ANIMATO!.

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AAAHHH! REAL MONSTERS:



Gabor Csupo and Arlene Klasky

By G. Michael Dobbs

They don't look like vampires, mummies or werewolves, but The Gromble, Ickis, and Krumm are definitely monsters.

Real Monsters.

Debuting this fall on Nickelodeon is the latest project from Klasky Csupo, Inc., *Aaahhhh! Real Monsters.* The studio which has given the world *Rugrats* and *Duckman* now turns its creative eye to the shadowy forms under the bed, or in the dusty corner of a closet...you remember them from your childhood...monsters.

Or in this case, monsters in training.

Aaahhh! Real Monsters involves a group of student monsters attending the Monster Academy. Their goal is learn the fine art of scaring people, which is not as easy as it sounds despite their grotesque appearance. Anyone who might be reading this should know the new show is not a re-tread of *The Groovy Ghoulies* or *Beetlejuice*. The studio has brought its own unique vision to the production which is both sophisticated and sophomoric. I can't help but love a show that is designed like a European animated short, but has armpit jokes.

Founded in 1981, Klasky Csupo had built a solid, but fairly low-key, reputation for doing animated credit sequences for motion pictures, commercials and music videos. In 1988, the studio went in a new direction,though, when it was chosen to animate Matt Groenings's *The Simpsons* for *The Tracey Ullman Show*. The short films were so popular, (as practically everyone on the planet knows) a half-hour series was developed for the Fox network, and Klasky Csupo animated the first three seasons of the show. A dispute with Fox and Gracie Films ended the association, and the studio received some bad press when charges of unfair

GROSS AND YET ARTISTIC!

labor practices were made by the animation union.

The Simpsons was not the studio's creation, though, and Klasky Csupo didn't receive much attention for their work. Their new show for Nickelodeon changed that condition.

Rugrats has won three Emmys and a Cable Ace Award, and that success led to two collaborations with Lilly Tomlin and Jane Wagner on the *Edith Anne* specials and the on-going series, *Duckman*. Besides the critical acclaim, *Rugrats* has been a big hit, ratings-wise. People love the off-beat character design and the funny, clever stories of a group of very young children and their parents.

Despite all the success, the studio has not been the recipient of the kind of rabid fan attention bestowed upon others in contemporary animation. Winning Emmys unfortunately sometimes doesn't attract as much notice as a game of frog baseball among the teenage fans who are the target audience for merchandisers. Frankly, I would have gladly bought a *Rugrats* tee shirt!

This situation may change with the debut of new episodes of *Duckman* and the faith Nickelodeon is showing *Aaahhh! Real Monsters*. The cable network has already committed to a second season.

Behind the show are the studios' founders Gabor Csupo and Arlene Klasky, and producer/creative consultant Chuck Swenson who are now all seasoned veterans of producing animation for television.



Scenes from *AAAHHH! Real Monsters*
© Nickelodeon



In an interview with ANIMATO! Klasky and Swenson spoke about the new series.

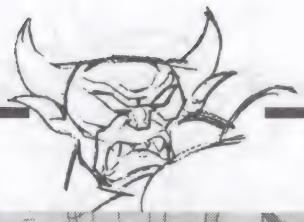
"Nickelodeon came to us. Vanessa Coffey was the executive producer of animation at Nickelodeon, and she wanted us to pitch some more ideas because *Rugrats* was sort of winding down," explained Klasky. "Gabor, the night before, put his thinking cap on and said, 'Well, no more dinosaurs, and we don't want to do babies any more. What do kids really like?'

"And I think he thought back to what our boys really liked. The kids really loved monsters. So he did some very lovable characters on a sheet of paper. He just sort of whipped them out, and that was a germ of an idea. When he presented it to Vanessa, she absolutely flipped."

Swenson said the idea went through a number of changes, and that a lot of the look of the show can be attributed to the Russian artists and animators who work on the show, including director Igor Kovalyov. Turning to artists from eastern Europe is natural for Csupo who was born in Budapest, Hungary, and fled the country in 1975. The influences of different artistic traditions "really put a twist" on the show," said Swenson.

Originally, the show was going to be set on a planet of monsters, but after developing the idea more with Nickelodeon, the show evolved into its present format. By having the monsters interact in the "real" world, Swenson noted the studio can show the humanity of the monsters and the monstrosity of we humans.

Klasky, Csupo, and Swenson have assembled an impressive vocal cast for the show. The star of *Aaahhh! Real Monsters* is Ickis, an insecure monster who resembles a cross between a bat and one of Santa's elves. He's portrayed by Charles Adler, a veteran actor whose voice work has been heard in series such as *Tiny Toons, Tail Spin,* and *The Smurfs*. The strict



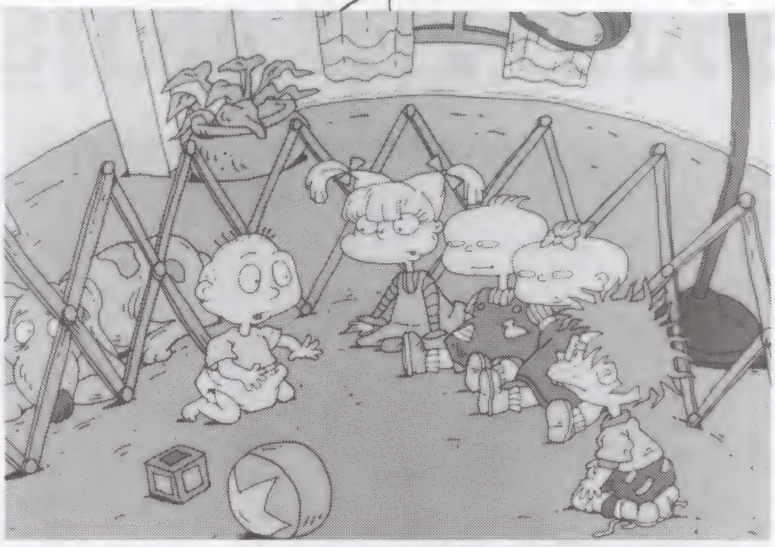
headmaster of the Monster Academy, The Gromble, is played by Gregg Burger, who also is Cornfed on *Duckman*. Christine Cavanaugh, who was Chuckie in *Rugrats* and Gosalyn on *Darkwing Duck* is Oblina, while first-time voice artist David S. Eccles is Krumm, the apprentice monster who holds his eyes in his hands, and never washes his armpits.

Guest voices will include Jonathan Winters, Tim Curry, John Astin, Elayne Boosler, John Byner, Eddie Deezen, Brock Peters, Billy Vera, and Jill Eikenberry.

Klasky and Swenson both emphasized that quality is vital to them. Respect for the intended audience is very important according to Swenson.

"This place doesn't treat that child audiences as 'mere children," said Swenson. "We knew we were children once, and we knew a great deal of what was going on. We lacked all the experience we now have, we weren't sophisticated, but we had innate knowledge, and we try to put that into all of our programming, out of respect for the audience, young and old."

"He [Csupo] loves making cartoons for children as well as for adults," added Klasky. "He and I and the general consensus of the studio is that we want to do something right for children, good for children. And we want adults to like it, too."



Rugrats gave Klasky Csupo needed exposure in the animation industry. © Nickelodeon



Duckman will return for a new season © Paramount Pictures

With others in animation raising the issue of of the role of writers in animation, there's little argument about them at Klasky Csupo.

"Obviously, animation is very close to our heart, but we learned a wonderful lesson working on *The Simpsons*, and that was how important a script is. Without a strong script, you don't have a strong blueprint. And so the way we work here as opposed to the way other studios or creators may work is that we always start from a script. We feel that works best for us. We have a very high regard for our writers, and we like to work in tandem with them. We find that's the best way to get the best of both worlds, " explained Klasky.

After the script is written, the voices are recorded and a very detailed storyboard with hundreds and hundreds of drawings is created, said Swenson. The storyboard is photographed and digitized by computer and combined with the voices to create a real-time rough version of the short. This way the studio can make changes and tighten the film, before sending the material to an overseas animation studio.

Technological advances help the studio maintain a level of quality within the time and financial restraints of television animation. While Klasky characterized the budget level of their shows as "very healthy," both she and Swenson readily admitted with a laugh that they're "never enough."

"We try to be adults about it, and say, 'Okay this is what we got to deal with, and how can we push the envelope? How can we make this the best it can possibly be, and still remain on time and a budget?'" said Swenson.

Both Swenson and Klasky agree, though, that no matter what amazing things computer animation can do, there is no substitute for hand-drawn illustrations in creating character animation, especially with their studios' funky, off-beat stars.

What's beyond the next two seasons of *Aaahhh! Real Monsters* and another season of *Duckman* for the studio? Klasky revealed that a feature may be in the works, but couldn't go into any detail. She and Swenson did say they wouldn't attempt to do a Disney-style feature. Instead they would bring the artisitic sensibilities the studio has developed for their television work to a theatrical feature.

In an industry of trend-followers and wannabes, that's great news.




Jack's Kitchen
by Joe Murray
Starring Waffle Boy!!
and Big Toothed Freddy
I can't take it in this kitchen anymore, I'm leaving today with Freddy
What?
How?
I got a plan.
FUP FUP FUP
Shhh.. here he comes...
Wait! Waffles are not just for breakfast, We can be your PALS!
UG?
OH NO.
See, I can hop around like food in those animated breakfast commercials.
YABBA YABBA
AACK
POG!!
Wha??
Hey!!
SNAP
POG POG POG
Wait, My Leg fell off, FREDDY!!! Fred...
Waffle boy's never been the same since he broke up with that bagel.
AAAAAGHH
at School
POG!
AAAAAGH
SMOOSH
Freddy, why are all these waffle croutons in your lunch box?
POG.
Later
~GROAN~
How come those animated foods on TV never get dismembered?
You're lucky man.. Cream cheese boy never made it past the dog.
MURRAY
©1994 JOE MURRAY PRODUCTIONS

THE OFFICIAL ANIMATO! FILM POLL BALLOT

We don't want to influence your vote, but if you need an example or listing of typical Independent animation, check out Page 20 in this issue of Animato!

Keep in mind your vote is wieghted with 10 pts. for a first place vote and 9 pts. for a second place vote and so on and so on to 1 pt. for tenth place.

Film Poll Rules and Conditions

1. Permission is granted to photocopy ballots.
2. Please print clearly.
3. Vote only for animation you've actually seen.
4. Including a name and address is optional, but we are randomly drawing names of participants for a free Animato! T-shirt. (One shirt for every 50 voters) All shirts are XL.
5. Mail Ballot To:
   Cartoon Classics/A.F.P.
   47 Village Trail
   Honeoye Falls, NY 14472

Independent Shorts

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Favorite Animators

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Favorite Villains

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Favorite Characters

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Feature Films

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Television Specials

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Theatrical Shorts

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City_____ State_____ Zip_____


YEH-HA-H HA-HAAAAA
IT'S HIM! IT'S HIM! SEE, SALLY, I TOLD YOU THE GREAT PUMPKIN WOULD SHOW UP! UH, SALLY?
EEEEAAAAAH
© PETE FITZGERALD '93

An ANIMATO! Introduction to Anime

More than just big-eyed animals and transforming robots, animation from Japan is extremely diverse in subject matter. If you've not yet taken the anime plunge, this intro should get you going.

By John Beam

Japan's animation industry (anime) goes back nearly as far as the United States' (1914), and their first "talkie" almost coincided with Disney's (1932), but it never really became an inseparable part of the Japanese culture until the late 1950's. It was at this time anime merged with popular Japanese comic books ("manga" - meaning literally "irresponsible picture"), particularly the work of Osamu Tezuka. Manga is currently the most popular form of print entertainment in Japan today. Over 60% of printed material sold in Japan is manga-related. Tezuka's influence in Japanese anime/manga is so great that he is respectfully referred to as the "God of manga" and "Japan's Walt Disney."

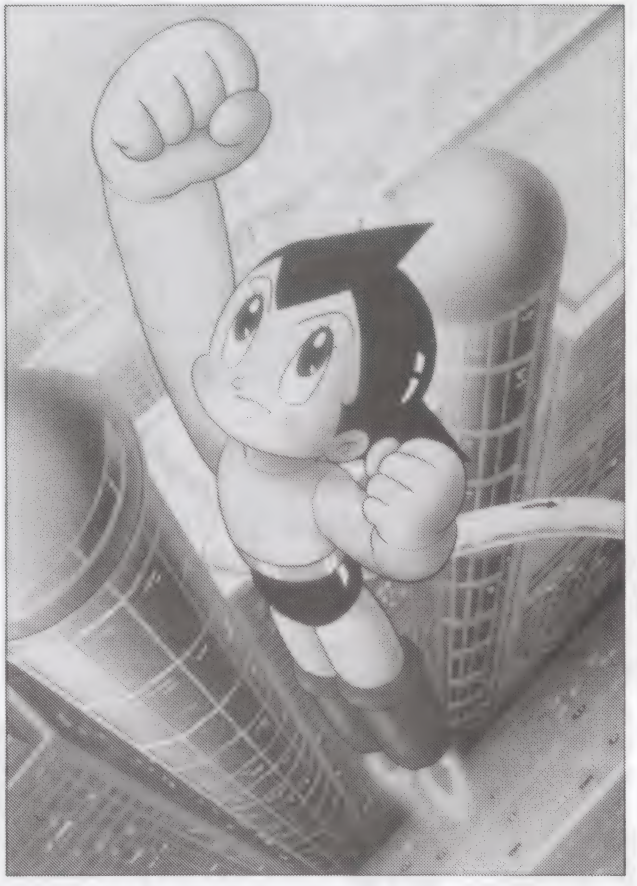
Osamu Tezuka was a prolific artist, producing over 600,000 pages of manga, several television programs, and over a dozen feature-length animated movies during his lifetime. One of his earliest manga successes (*Tetsuawan Atom*, a.k.a. *Astro Boy*) was his earliest of many successes in animation. He was followed by other manga artists who also became popular anime director / producers such as Go Nagai and Reiji Matsumoto in the late 1960's and throughout the 1970's. More recent popular manga artists who have become immortalized through anime versions of their work are Masemune Shirow, Hayao Miyazaki (possibly the most influential animation director living), and the incredibly successful Rumiko Takahashi.

Before the coming of Rumiko Takahashi, women who drew manga wrote their work for young girls and ladies ("Shojo manga" or girl's comics make up approximately 30% of manga's total market). However, Rumiko Takahashi's appeal reached out to all genders and cultures. The vast majority of her work (*Urusei Yatsura (Those Obnoxious Aliens), Maison Ikkoku (Ikkoku Manor), Mermaid Forest, & Ranma 1/2*) is very popular world-wide.

These all have been animated through television series', feature-length movies and OVA's (Original Video Animation - animation created especially for video sales and rental). While Ms. Takahashi is not very much involved in the production of the animated versions of her work, her advent has brought about a successful movement for women in the fields of manga/anime writing and even animation direction.

Hayao Miyazaki began his career as an assistant animator for Osamu Tezuka's Mushi Productions in the mid 1960's. His first major directorship was *Lupin III - Cagliostro Castle* (1979), which is based on a popular manga character (Lupin) created by Monkey Punch. This film is considered by many the best animated film to ever come out of Japan. However, Miyazaki did not truly come to his own until he wrote and directed *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1984). This story began as a manga piece in 1981, which ran intermittently until March of 1994. He hoped to sell *Nausicaa* as a feature film to a major studio. A studio was formed under Miyazaki to create this film (later named Studio Ghibli) which continues to produce many of the best animators in Japan today. *Nausicaa* continues today as Japan's most popular animated film and it's protagonist is perennially the most popular animated character. Other vastly popular films by Hayao Miyazaki are *Laputa, Castle in the Sky* (1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), and *The Crimson Pig, a.k.a. Porcco Rosso* (1992). These films have earned Mr. Miyazaki the destination of being the most respected animation director today.

Masemune Shirow's work is quite different from Takahashi's or Miyazaki's in that while it can be quite humorous, it is also very pessimistic. Most of his stories (*Appleseed, Intron Depot, Ghost in a Shell, Dominion - Tank Police, Black Magic - M-66*) deal with a post-apocalyptic earth where our ecology is in ruins and technology and crime has run amok. These sort of dark stories have become very popular in the past dozen or so years. Again, his popularity has brought about OVA series' and animated features. This popularity (as is with Rumiko Takahashi's and Hayao Miyazaki's) is world-wide.



Perhaps the best known Japanese animation character is the late Osamu Tezuka's The Mighty Atom. © 1982, 1994 Tezuka Production Co., Ltd.

With the marriage of manga and anime, Japanese animation became very story-oriented, and dealt less with artistic and technological advancement. The differences between anime and American-based animation are numerous. The most common differences are:

1.) The voice tracks are almost always recorded *after* the animation is produced, meaning that most anime voice tracks are edited into the films. While this can be distracting; seeing that the mouths do not move with the dialogue, it makes dubbing the animation in other languages easier.

2.) Directors of Japanese animation are often experienced film directors rather than experienced animators. Anime is therefore often story and plot driven rather than visuals or music driven.

3.) Most anime is less "full" than western-

based animation. It is often shot on 3's, 4's, or even 5's. This of course makes much of anime a bit "jerky" and less fluid. This drawback is often lessened by tremendous action scenes, special effects, cute character design, and dramatic layouts.

4.) Anime stories usually concern humans and relationships rather than animal characters and mysticism (although anime for children deal with such topics). These stories are mostly aimed at teens and young adults. Nudity and violence is not uncommon (some anime is even pornographic). It is far less restricted than live-action Japanese films. There is a movement among Japanese consumers to make some of the anime less violent and graphic.

5.) Japanese animated characters are not stereotypical Japanese in appearance. Many anime characters have rounded eyes and other "western features" (red heads and blonde characters). Western viewers are often confused seeing so many "white people" in Japanese animation. These devices often distinguish characters from one another; however, this also demonstrates sort of an in-built inferiority complex among the producers of anime and manga who believe that Japanese people look too much alike. This does not mean that the Japanese do not stereotype other races (Blacks, Chinese, some Caucasian, etc . . .).

6.) Since anime often is based upon popular manga series', it has an in-built audience base. Nearly all of the most popular anime television series are manga-based. Fans of a particular print series can count on an animated television and/or OVA series release.

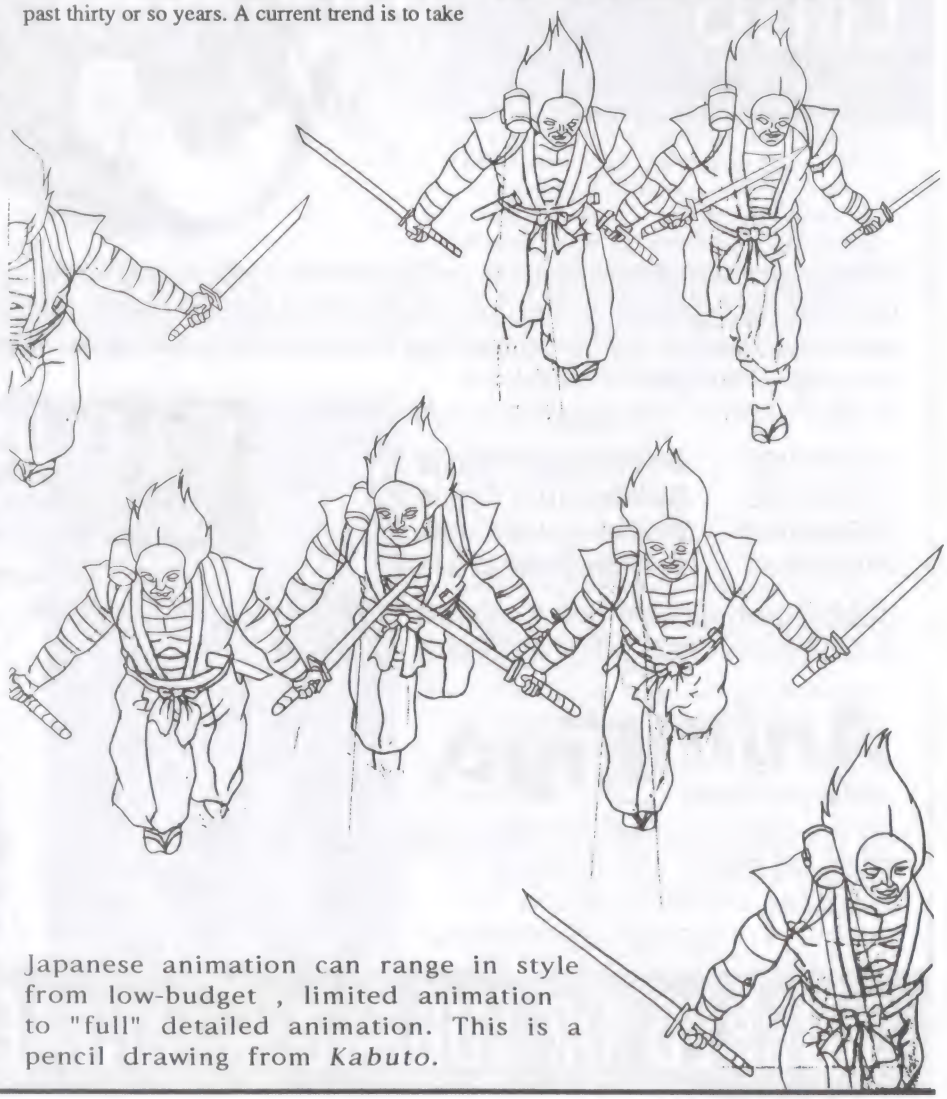
Anime's popularity in America and the west is a very recent phenomenon. Most western fans have enjoyed many of the science fiction adventure series which have been produced over the past twenty or so years (i.e. *Science Ninja Team Gachaman* a.k.a. Battle of the Planets, *Space Battleship Yamato* a.k.a. Starblazers, and *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross* a.k.a. Robotech), which have been syndicated in English-language versions on American television. Many fans have sought out the Japanese versions of these and other anime films, formed fan clubs, and have even made their own subtitled tape copies. American companies are currently buying up anime, and own the rights to these films, much to the chagrin of many fans. However, since anime is becoming more mainstreamed to foreign audiences, more people who would not have had access to anime are being exposed.

One of the most popular films on foreign release today is Katsuhiko Nishijima's *Project A-ko* (1985). This film is heavily influenced by almost every aspect of Japanese pop culture, from the style of character design, the school uniforms the girls wear, to the science fiction genre stories which pervades throughout anime. It is often referred to as a "Rosetta Stone" for those unfamiliar with anime. However, most of it's appeal is due to the fact that it is a parody which lampoons more serious anime. A few other distinguishing characteristics are : *Project A-ko* was written, co-scripted, and directed by women, and the musical soundtrack was composed by Americans and was recorded in Hollywood. Yuji Moriyama, *Project A-ko's* co-writer, animation director, and character designer, also worked on the animated versions of *Urusei Yatsura* and *Maison Ikkoku,* therefore Rumiko Takahashi's influence is felt throughout the film.

Another incredibly popular film from recent years is Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* (1987). Much of this film's appeal is due to the fact that not only is the animation very fluid and the voices are synched with the animation, but it is action-packed and highly violent. The action scenes are incredibly well-staged, and the animation throughout is superb. However, the violent nature of the film often repels viewers who prefer lighter entertainment in their animation.

Anime today continues on as it has for the past thirty or so years. A current trend is to take film material from the past and make animated versions of it, although making animated versions of popular manga is still going strong. However, one of the most popular television series is an original plot loosely based on Jules Verne's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, entitled *Nadia and the Secret of Blue Water* (1990-92). This series has recently challenged Miyazaki's *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* as anime fandom's most popular (although *Nausicaa* continues on as it has since 1984, only losing its top spot intermittently). Its appeal appears to be the fact that it has a very good foundation and people like its use of high-tech machinery in the 19th Century (a souped-up *Nautilus* as well as other bizarre vehicles). There is also an appeal in the Nadia character in that she is quite strong-willed, intelligent, and exotic. That a character with dark skin would be shown in such a positive light is a definite breakthrough, not only in anime, but in animation in general.

Japanese animation enthusiast John Beam has reviewed anime for ANIMATO!.



Japanese animation can range in style from low-budget , limited animation to "full" detailed animation. This is a pencil drawing from *Kabuto.*

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ANIMATO! ANIME GUIDE

Don't know where to start on your exploration of anime? Let ANIMATO! help with this new column!

Vampire Hunter D
Streamline Pictures
80 min.

Vampire Hunter D, directed by Toyoo Ashida and retailing for $29.95, is set in the year 12,090 A.D. (according to the back of the video box) where vampires and mutants roam the earth. The story revolves around a young girl, Doris, as she attempts to escape the interest of a powerful vampire, named Count Magnus Lee. To aid her in the attempt she hires a Vampire Hunter called "D," and offers to sleep with him as payment.

By setting the story in the far future, after a nuclear war, there was a lot of room for new and different vampire themes. However the story used the old, tired theories about vampires and their lives. No variations were explored. The use of mutant characters in the movie was well done and added a little surprise to an otherwise monotonous plot.

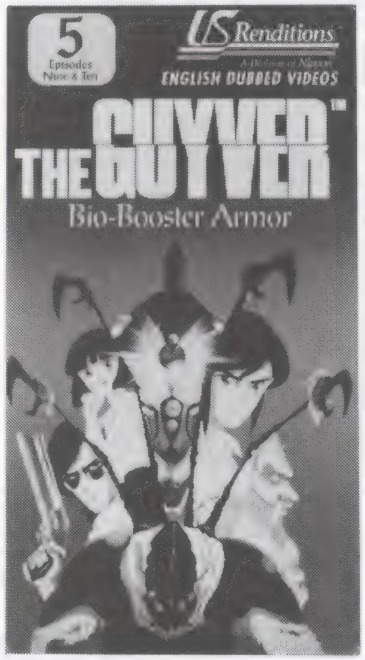
I found the plot very often predictable and some parts incomprehensible. The ironic plot twist that comes at the end of the movie is seen from miles off. The story moves sluggishly from one dramatic scene to another, often with very little tying them together. The main character of Doris was inconsistent. She offers herself to a complete stranger, but won't accept help from a local man at the same price. She is raising a younger brother in a world that is dangerous and unpredictable, and doing very well. At the beginning of the movie her independence and self reliance is established, yet by the end of the movie she is willing to let others fight for her while she huddles in fear.

Another unexplained plot point is D's interesting anatomical feature. How he acquired it or if he was a mutant as well as a vampeil (half human, half vampire) were never fully explored. When it saves his life nothing is explained as to how it accomplished this. The audience is to accept this amazing feat at face value. It was too much like a hero stumbling across the answer without ever being smart enough to find it himself. I can see the reasoning behind not explaining it and leaving it a mystery but then the rescue seems to much like pulling a rabbit out of the hat. It happened, but you can't explain why.

The saving grace to the movie was the animation. Although I didn't enjoy the plot and found it almost impossible to watch the movie a second time, the animation was a pleasure to see. The mood was set with dark and subdued colors in the background, with the brightest light in the movie being set around "D." The character's motions were consistently smooth, never giving the impression of a cheap animation flick. The backgrounds were well developed. They give the viewer the feeling of a bleak, desolate world, and were not continuously reused throughout the movie. Objects in the foreground appeared to be a part of the events taking place instead of looking unnaturally two-dimensional. Consistent with other anime motion pictures is the use of unusual visual effect. Some of these include blurred backgrounds, long impossible angles, incredibly high jumps and slowed action during fights scenes. For the most part I find these effects distracting, but they didn't take away from the overall impression of the quality of the animation. It was clean, consistent and very easy to watch. **Celina Brooks**

The Guyver: Bio Booster Armour
Tape 5; Episodes 9 and 10
U.S. Renditions
USR-VD25
60 minutes

If the recent live-action adaptation of *The Guyver* has been your sole exposure to the character, then brace yourself before viewing this tape. While the live-action film was a goofy mess of high camp (c'mon, Jimmy Walker as a villain?) and harmless chop socky, the animated Guyver is a no-holds-barred action science fiction series.



The premise of the show is that a high school student stumbles upon the Guyver which is a kind of living weapon. Once it attaches itself to you, it can encase you in a nearly indestructible body armour, and give you strength and weapons of incredible destructiveness. Naturally, there are a variety of bad guys, including one scientist who wants the secret of the Guyver, and creates own mindless warriors, hideous mutants called the Zoanoids.

Like much anime, this is a serial, and US Renditions does a fairly good job setting up each episode for those of us who've not had the chance of seeing the series up to that point.

If gore is a problem for you, though, then avoid *The Guyver*. In this tape, during episode nine, the Guyver's father is turned into a hideous Zoanoid, and our hero can't bring himself to kill the monster. The result is a nasty scene in which The Guyver has his brain crushed. With chunks of grey matter (and red matter as well) hanging from his helmet, the Guyver device takes over his body, and kills his father.

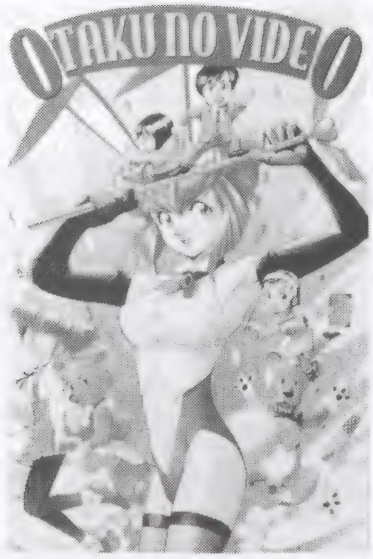
The animation is very limited at times with the director pulling the old Doris Wishman tricks such as showing characters when they speak from the back of their heads. In anime, though, the animation is not as important as the story, and if you're looking for a gory science fiction soap opera, *The Guyver* may be for you.

Otaku No Video
AnimEigo #AT093-002
100 minutes

I have to admit that by reading the liner notes, I didn't think I'd be able to truly appreciate this production. The story of an anime fan who aspires to be the "king of the the fans," this mock documentary is a satire of anime fandom that's crammed with in-jokes.

I was wrong, though, as this tape aboundly proves that a fan is a fan whether in the United States or Japan.

Otaku No Video tells the story of Kubo, a young man who was an anime fan while in high school, but now has a "normal" life as a university student. After accidentally meeting an old friend, Tanaka, Kubo gets drawn into Tanaka's "circle," a self-defined group of fans. Kubo has difficulty explaining this renewed interest in anime and model kits to his girlfriend who eventually dumps him. Thinking about this rejection during a futile job search with Tanaka, Kubo decides he will show his former girlfriend and become a



mainstram success by becoming a professional fan, the "otaking." The story then chronicles his rise, fall, and rise again.

Otaku No Video plays with a common fan situation...your interests can isolate you from the "normal" world to the point that you really can't function too well in the realm of the non-fan. Think a moment, what comic book, horror film, model kit, science fiction, Star Trek, or Dr. Who fan in this country hasn't once felt a burning anger at non-fans who just don't get "it?" What fan hasn't been consumed with details about subjects most people view as trivial? What fan hasn't been called "obsessive?"

Highlighting the satire are a number of live-action staged "interviews" with various fans which generally shows them as either "straight" people trying to hide their fannish interests or as complete losers (such as the guy who who aspires to have the "perfect video collection" but never watches anything he tapes!)

The sub-titles are always very legible, and the notes that come with the tape are an invaluable help in picking up many of the references non-Japanese, non-anime enthusiasts would miss. **GMD**

Bubblegum Crisis
English Language edition
AnimEigo
ET094-002
56 minutes

AnimEigo as a company has long prided itself on its careful sub-titling and liner notes on its anime imports. With the release of a dubbed version of one of the most popular anime series in the United States, the company is obviously reaching out to new audiences, and *Bubblegum Crisis* is certainly a savvy choice for this effort.

A fast-moving science fiction tale set in "MegaTokyo" in 2032, *Crisis* is the story of a group fo young women who use highly advanced weapons and armour to act as mercenaris. Their principal target, though is the GENOM Corporation and the androids they manufacture, the Boomers.

If you want me to zone out quickly, describe something as "cyberpunk" or "apolcotypic." There have been too many recent science fiction productrion, live action and animated, that repeat the same tired cliches about just how bad the future is going to be. The saving grace of Crisis is the sense of humor the production shows about itself. From the rock'n'roll star who doubles as one of the mercenaries to the stereotypical cop acting on his own, Crisis plays with the cliches of the genre.

The animation is certainly solid, a notch or two over standard television fare, and I thought the dubbing job was done with care. I know I want to see the rest of eight-tape series. **GMD**



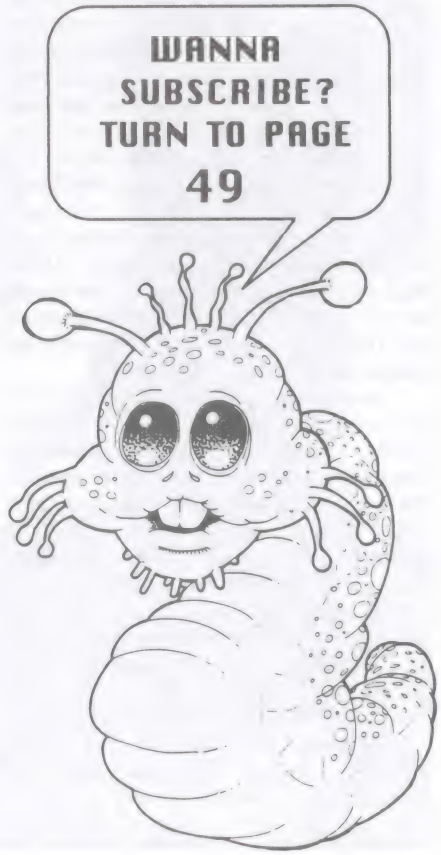
Leo The Lion: King of the Jungle
The First Adventure
Palm Beach Entertainment
25 minutes

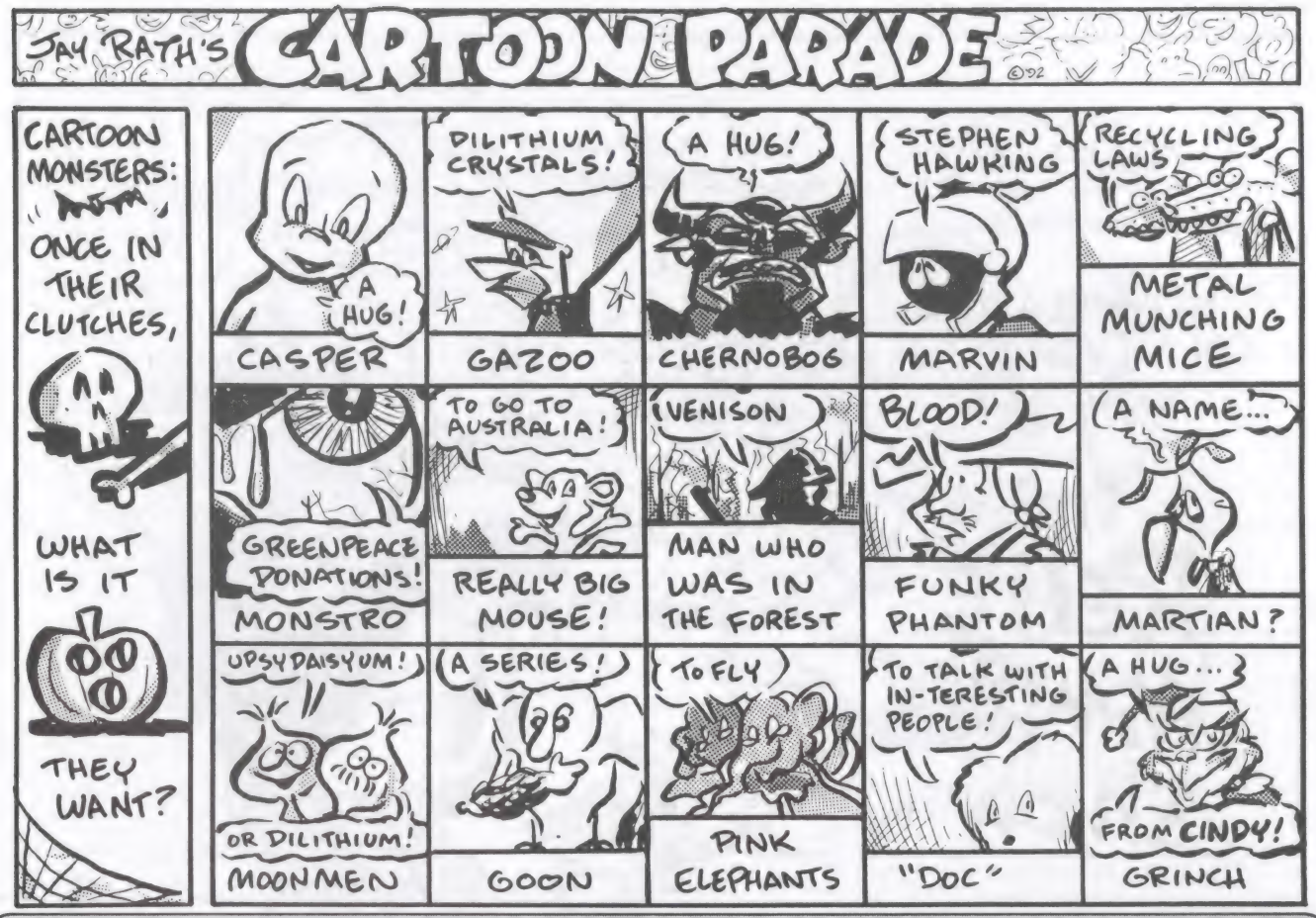
The first is a series of sell-through tapes ($6.98 suggested retail) which features the follow-up to the Tezuka *Kimba the White Lion* series will be a disappointment to anime fans. While the tape is recorded in the SP mode (a pleasant rarity for videotapes in this price range), and the video transnfer is acceptable (although the source materials appears to be a slightly beat up 16mm print), it's difficult to recommend it.

First, there are no production credits, either for the original production or for the dub job. Considering the name Tekuza alone would sell this thing to anime fans in this country, why aren't there production credits? Second, the dubbing job is awful with apparently one male actor and one female actress doing all the voices, and the terrible music appears to be new as well.

Third and last, the cartoon itself is not very good. While at times the animation is clever and adventurous, at other times it has the worst characteristics of low-budget television animation. The story is sluggishly paced and predictable.

This is a tape that would appeal to hard-core anime completists, if it had been produced properly. As is, it may be appealing to very young children. **GMD**





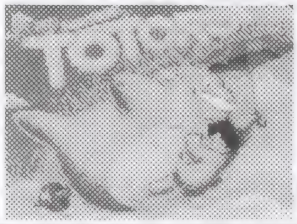
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featuring Emma Teavy as JUNE CLEAVAGE and the honorable Judge Michaels as the BEAVIS

produced by EMMA TEAVY

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Letters
From Page 3

Cool, heh, heh, heh...
Patrick Ramsey
Las Vegas NV

I enjoyed Jim Fanning and Russ Miller's *Beavis and Butt-Head* episode guide. While you were unable to get the correct titles to many of the episodes, ("Paint-Thinner Blues" was actually called "Home Improvement.") your descriptions of them were excellent.

I would like to offer a little information on the two episodes that you were unable to obtain. The first is "Way Down Mexico Way," in which they hitchhike to Mexico, look for M-80's, say "these people are stupid" when no one understands English, and try Mexican hot sauce with predictable results. I would give this episode two "huh's" at the most because MTV apparently banned the second half of it, leaving it incomplete. The second, "Good Credit" was one of the true classics. In it Beavis and Butt-Head steal Mr. Anderson's credit card and buy out a pet store with it. I would give it four "huh's." You may not get to see this one on MTV in its entirety because it has fire references in it.

Lastly, before closing, I would like to call on other Beavis and Butt-Head fans to phone, fax, E-mail and write MTV to display displeasure over the draconian censorship measures imposed on the show. I know MTV is concerned about its sponsors, but I also know that Mike Judge didn't create his characters to be role-models or to sell ice tea or tennis shoes. Mike Judge put a lot of himself into his characters. Everything from Beavis' pyromania, to their use of dangerous and quixotic means of getting high are integral components of their character developement. To remove them would be to make (*B&B*) the vapid, eviserated shadows of their former selves they are today.

P.S. There are many ways that MTV could explore to make this underground masterpiece child-proof and available to mature, responsible fans.

Correction
Fred Patten
Streamline Pictures
Santa Monica, CA

I enjoyed it [issue 29] very much, but there is a big factual error in Andrew Osmond's review of *Lensmen* on page four which should be corrected. Osmond refers to it as "Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's *Lensmen*, a 1989 tribute " to *Star Wars*. The director was Yoshiaki Kawajiri; and it was released in 1984, not 1989. In fact, a special American 35mm premiere of *Lensmen* (with subtitles) was one of the features of the 1984 World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles; and it was partly due to American fannish demand for a video copy of that movie for years after that screening, that Streamline Pictures picked *Lensmen* as one of its first acquisitions in 1990. There may be some a superficial similarity between the names of Yoshikazu Yasuhiko and Yoshiaki Kawajiri, but their art sytles and directorial approaches are so different that it's almost like talking about Ralph Bakshi's *An American Tale* or Woolie Reitherman's *Bebe's Kids*.

Rocko
From Page 36

him to a comic book convention. Before they leave, they meet young Karen, who seems romantically attracted to Heffer. She says she can't go with them because she is on her way to a job interview at Chokey Chicken. Here is a good place to roll the "Twilight Zone" theme music . .

DIRTY DOG *

This cartoon within-a-cartoon deals with Rocko trying to give Spunky a bath and the insects and parasites that live on Spunky. The parasites are a ringworm and a tick named Bloaty who are caricatures of Jackie Gleason and Art Carney in *The Honeymooners*, complete with their own 1950's-style TV theme song. This could also easily be a Flintstones episode, (another *Honeymooners* spoof) with the difference being there are no wives present. A canned laugh track also adds to the nostalgia. Bloaty is trying to butter up his boss for a raise, and invites him to dinner at his place (Spunky). The boss is in such a habit of firing people he yells it out of reflex ("You're FIRED!.....Uh,.....I mean, good evening"). Back in the big world, Rocko finally gets Spunky in the bath but falls in himself. The tick and ringworm wash up on Rocko, where they convert to caricatures of The Skipper and Gilligan ("Are you okay little buddy?"). The camera then zooms in on a close-up of the life forms that live on Bloaty, and we see a couple of bacteria that are caricatures of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. And so on, and so on. . . . . .

Boston-based Matthew Hasson is a regular contributor to ANIMATO!.

POWERS OF HELL
From Page 43

enchanted Sword of Truth that saves our handsome hero from a fiery death.

To Reitherman, there was more going on in this compellingly horrific sequence than just drawings. "It's something you can't just draw, and that's the beauty of animation. It can only be done in animation...you start to get the feeling of a force of nature out of it — it's a little bit like sex." Animator Eric Cleworth based the movements of the fire-breathing dragon's head and neck on a striking rattlesnake.

Contemporary Disney animation has made a return to the horror elements that only animation can so powerfully and frightfully convey. Recent features such as *The Black Cauldron* (1985), *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Aladdin* (1992) — with its villain a sinister sorcerer who transforms himself into a giant cobra to battle the young hero — all include strong doses of horror. With these new films Disney has reclaimed its full animated vocabulary. "Disney does sentimentality awfully well," Woolie Reitherman observed, "but you've got to mix it with guts as well."

Jim Fanning is an animation historian and writer whose work appears frequently in ANIMATO!.

Preservation
From Page 16

Disney has completed work on both films, it will make a duplicate set of preservation materials to give to UCLA in gratitude for its cooperation, and has similar arrangements with other archives that supply the company with unique or best-surviving nitrate materials. In this way, the studio benefits, and so do the archives.

If you ever get to see *A Feather in His Collar*, you might wonder what all the fuss was about. It's only ninety seconds long, and isn't exactly loaded with laughs or brilliant artwork. All of us knew we hadn't discovered some long-neglected masterpiece here. But to preserve only the best, and to forsake the remainder, is both short-sighted and criminal. Disney has taken the position that all of its animated works are worth preserving, even those that aren't much good and have little chance of being seen. The present-day commercial value of such items is practically nil, yet Disney is expending the same amount of money and effort on these forgotten works as their more profitable ventures. It's an attitude that is rare, and is to be commended.

And that's the story of how *A Feather in His Collar* was found, and is being preserved. If you're interested in finding out more about preserving cartoons, write ASIFA-Hollywood, Animation Preservation Project, P.O. Box 787, Burbank, CA 91503.

SCRAPPY
From Page 14

famous paintings.

Like most of the significant cartoon stars of the early and mid-1930s, Scrappy really wasn't destined to outlive the decade. By 1936, Columbia's cartoons began to take on more and more of a Warner Bros.-like screwball flavor, a style of humor that Scrappy was ill-suited to tackle. He became a more placid, somewhat more realistic little boy, and the cartoons lost their weird charm and slightly unnerving edge.

Like Porky Pig, who went through an similar evolution, Scrappy began hosting spot-gag cartoons, such as *Scrappy's News Flashes* (1937). Eventually, in films including *A Worm's Eye View* and *The Millionaire Hobo* (both 1939), he became a minor character in his own cartoons. (The title character in the latter film is a vagabond entertainingly voiced by Mel Blanc, who contributed to the soundtracks of many Columbia shorts of the period; Scrappy has a bit part as a messenger boy.)

A few months after Scrappy made his final appearance in *The Little Theatre* (1941), Frank Tashlin came to Columbia and made *The Fox and the Grapes*, an excellent, Warner-style cartoon that introduced the Fox and the Crow, the studio's major characters of the 1940s. Unfortunately, the Fox and the Crow have faded as completely from public view as Scrappy has. They'd be a perfect subject for a future Curiosity Shop column — except I've only seen a handful of them myself.

When not writing about obscure cartoons in *Curiosity Shop*, former Animato editor Harry McCracken covers computers and multimedia for magazines including PC World, Multimedia World, and Digital Video. Know of a forgotten masterpiece he should be aware of? Write him c/o Animato. Special thanks to Kip Williams for research assistance with this installment.



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TYTLA
From Page 39

certain scenes that come alive with old Tytla vitality," says John Canemaker. He points out one example as, "The Jeckyll cat in *Mighty Mouse Meets Jeckyll and Hyde Cat* (Terry-Toons, 1944) who changes in front of a mirror and his talons grow and he goes into this fascinating change into an evil character. It's wonderful, bravura work, but it's only one in an ocean of mediocre scenes."

While working at Paramount, Tytla began to moonlight for his friend and former Disney colleague, David Hilberman at Tempo Productions. Here Tytla did commercial animation for a new medium called television. He joined Tempo full-time in 1950, but had trouble with the more modern, stylized look animation took on at the time. "He didn't like the UPA influence," says Canemaker. "He liked the rounded, dimensional, in every sense of the word, characters that he had at Disney."

By 1958, Tytla was running his own animation studio, Tytla Productions, Inc., which would allow him to work on his last attempt at "personality animation," as supervising director of the animation sequences in *The Incredible Mr. Limpet* (1964).

After the film, Tytla's health began to deteriorate and he longed desperately to go back to Disney. "He never got over what he had lost there," notes Canemaker. "As years went by it became not less, but more painful. He continually tried to return to Disney, writing letters, suggesting ways that he might send animation through the mail, which is not the way Disney did it then and it is not the way they do it now."

In the years before his death on December 31, 1968, Vladimir Tytla, the man who created a unique form of Disney animation, was sadly nothing more than a freelance animator. Thankfully, he left behind a wondrous legacy that can be enjoyed in his films and at the Katonah museum. John Canemaker hopes that the retrospective helps people remember Tytla and the impact he made on our animation history. "I hope that it will add to their knowledge of the art of animation," he says. "Particularly, that they will know intimately one of the great architects and great artists of the form of animation known as 'personality animation,' which is still having an enormous impact on audiences today."

Mike Lyons is a Long-Isand-based writer who wrote on *The Lion King* in the last issue of ANIMATO!.

IT'S BARBARIC, BUT HEY,

Opinion by Tim Smith

With its video release last year, the film *Aladdin* has joined *Fantasia* in an elite Disney club of two. What is the common bond between these two films which are separated by over fifty years chronologically? Between their theatrical and subsequent video releases, *Aladdin* and *Fantasia* are the only two Disney features which had to exorcise their ethnically offensive content before sliding into the VCR.

Of course with *Fantasia* the situation is a little different. The black centaurs and centaurettes, relegated to braiding manes and shining hooves, were eventually removed from theatrical releases in later years because of gradually changing societal standards. *Aladdin,* however, managed to make the move from "hit" to "hit list" in just a matter of months,

Many Arab groups took offense to the film's portrayal of their people. The villains, they say, have accentuated Arab characteristics and the Arab heroes seem — well...almost white. And, truth be known, they might have a point.

One prominent spokesman for the Arab cause has been Casey Kasem, the former host of *America's Top 40* and also the voice artist for a host of cartoon characters including Shaggy from the Scooby Doo series.

Arab demands have included specific cuts in the film and concessions regarding how *Aladdin* will be redubbed for foreign markets. There are objections to the barbaric portrayal of Arabs in the film and even to the use of the word "barbaric" in the opening theme song.

The official response from Disney starkly reveals the change in corporate philosophy which has occurred at the studio since Walt Disney's death in 1966. During the years when Walt was manning the helm money was a means to an end, rather than an end in and of itself. Symbolically speaking, it now seems as if Scrooge McDuck has wrested control of the company away from Mickey Mouse.

In a bygone era there were notable occasions upon which Walt Disney risked the financial well-being of the entire studio, scorning the skeptics, in order to meet the standards of creativity and quality his name had come to epitomize. The faith always placed in that philosophy was inevitably validated, but unfortunately it was a philosophy that was apparently buried along with Walt.

The studio's official response to the Arab concerns was issued by an unnamed spokesperson and indelicately stated that no major changes would be made in *Aladdin,* the movie made money which is what Disney does, so subsequently, if it makes money then it must be right.

That all seems clear enough, but what is Disney C.E.O. Michael Eisner to do when political correctness jeopardizes a multimillion dollar profit potential? Well, the answer is as obvious as the nose on Pinocchio's face—you simply make a token concession. And what could be expendable from a blockbuster hit like *Aladdin?* Some song lyrics? Great idea!

Don't tell anyone you read it here, but for the record, here are the lines you'll only remember from the theater. In describing the mythical setting of 15th-century Agrabah, a street vendor sings, "Oh, I come from a land/From a faraway place/ Where the caravan camels roam/Where they cut off your nose/If they don't like your face/It's barbaric . . . but hey, it's home!"

The home video replaces the "nose-face" lines above with, "Where it's flat and immense/ And the heat is intense/It's barbaric. . . " This concession might not seem like much but hopefully it will be enough to keep Eisner from having to answer that "Roommate Wanted" ad from Salmon Rushdie.

Ironically, the early Disney publicity for *Aladdin* seemed to take a positive, almost boastful attitude about the fact that it was the studio's second feature to star a non-white lead character. The first, 1967's *The Jungle Book* , was not, however, a good testing ground for the type of backlash which has afflicted *Aladdin.* Except for the brief appearance of the water girl at the very end of the film, *The Jungle Book* was devoid of all humans characters except Mowgli, and subsequently the concept of offending Indians with the portrayal of supporting characters was never really an issue.

The Jungle Book was, personally, Walt Disney's last animated film, and in examining his extensive career's work, the issue of racism actually surfaces much less often than one might expect. A primary reason for this is that Walt, for the most part, attempted to avoid topical material in his films. In stark contrast to this, films made during the 1930's and 1940's at studios like Warners, Fleischer, and MGM are inundated with celebrity caricatures, many of whom were black, and most of which do not now pass the litmus test of broadcast acceptability.

The most notable occasion upon which Disney does venture into the ethnic arena would probably be the 1937 short "Mother Goose Goes Hollywood," which was nominated for an Academy Award. The film features a vast array of almost 30 contemporary Hollywood celebrities, all assuming the roles of famous characters from Mother Goose which in some way play upon the personas of the celebrities.

Included among the cast are some black celebs such as Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Stepin Fetchit, and also some supporting members of Calloway's band. These characters all talk and move like their real-life counterparts and suggest question which broadcast television has obviously struggled with for years. Why is it acceptable to show theatrical cartoons with caricatures of famous white entertainers, but unacceptable to show theatrical cartoons with caricatures of famous black entertainers?

To some extent, the character of Stepin Fetchit provides an answer to that. As his stage name implies, Fetchit was a character actor known for his frequent portrayal of the slow moving, self-deprecating, stereotypical Hollywood "darkie" for which the entire film industry drew criticism. In this particular case, even the real life actor carries the stigma of racism.

And one other moment in "Mother Goose . . ." stands out as particularly painful. The film features a running gag with Katherine Hepburn, as Little Bo Beep, looking unsuccessfully for her sheep. At one point she takes a nursery rhyme pie in the face, blackbird pie perhaps, and in full blackface utters, "Iz eny of you-all folks seen mah sheep enywheh?"

Another Disney short which has fallen prey to the censors is "Pluto's Judgement Day." The storyline of the film has Pluto in a kangaroo court at the gates of hell, being called to task for a lifetime of cat abuse. A series of feline witnesses tell their tales of woe to the judge and jury, and the final testimony from this litany of victims comes from a trio of pickaninny kitties.

A quivering Pluto shudders as they testify that, "He drank our milk, and stole our liver, and then he put poor Uncle Tom in the river." The guilt of his heinous crime is clearly etched upon Pluto's face as he literally shrinks in his shackles.

As the black kittens pull the casket across the courtroom floor, each of Uncle Tom's nine lives are depicted by an angelic chorus vocalizing a gospel dirge of "Nine Little Angels" sung to the tune of "Ten Little Indians."

Of course the mindset and creative perspective of the artists involved with this film, made over 50 years ago, were a product of the era. In retrospect, however, one cannot help but look back and sense an attitude of, "Hey, if the Blacks don't take offense to these jokes, why would the Indians?"

IT'S JUST A CARTOON

Prior to the production disruption caused by World War II, the Disney studio managed to complete five major full-length features. *Snow White, Pinocchio,* and *Bambi* are all free of any racial overtones, but *Dumbo* has a quintet of black streetwise crows who swoop in during the later part of the film.

The crows all speak in a heavy black dialect, but their footage has never been censored, perhaps because their role in the film is fairly glamorous. They might even be considered the heroes as they assist in enabling Dumbo to fly, which is the turning point in the film. And they also get to perform the movie's best song, the bouncy be-bop tune "When I See an Elephant Fly."

Of the original Disney features, sometimes referred to as "The Big 5," it was the aforementioned *Fantasia* which produced the studio's greatest racial headaches. Because the precise synchronization of sound and film was of the utmost importance in the creation of the movie, subsequent cuts provided the studio with a nightmarish problem.

The current release of *Fantasia* has experienced two types of revision. In scenes where the ethnic caricatures could be isolated in relatively small portions of the screen, a "pan-and-scan" method has been employed. For example, in one original scene where a black centaurette is shining the hooves of a white centaurette while she prepares her face and hair, the reshot film shows only the corner of the screen with the head of the white centaurette. Most members of an unassuming audience never suspect what used to be going on in the bottom left-hand corner.

The scenes which are too filled with racial caricature to be thusly salvaged, are now replaced with the most appropriate choice of recycled footage from other parts of the film. Especially from a musical perspective, this process was much less obtrusive than full-scale cuts.

During the early 1940's the efforts of the nation, as well as its animation studios, focused upon the war effort. While World War II proved to be fertile ground for racism in animation, Disney took the high road there for the most part.

Donald, Goofy, and Pluto all aided the U.S. military effort in various shorts, and the Seven Dwarfs even came out of retirement to march for Savings Bonds. But whether by calculation or coincidence, Disney characters refrained from some of the more outrageous activities which occurred at other studios.

While Popeye proclaims, "You're a Sap, Mr. Jap" and Bugs Bunny personally "Nips the Nips," Donald Duck merely has nightmares about Hitler in "Der Fuehrer's Face," the 1943 Academy Award winner which is probably the most notable of the Disney war films.

Shortly after World War II, Disney released a film with perhaps the most interesting racial overtones of any in the studio's history, namely 1946's *Song of the South,* which has never come out on home video in the United States, but is currently available on laserdisc in Japan.

A combination of live-action and animation, the film depicts plantation life in the Old South where an aged black man named Uncle Remus has attained legendary status as a storyteller for all children, black and white.

His tales of Bre'r Fox, Bre'r Bear, and Bre'r Rabbit come to life in animated sequences, and the portions of the film which combine animation and live action were easily the most sophisticated to date, thanks to the genius of Ub Iwerks.

Uncle Remus is a most respectable lead character, certainly the most perceptive and insightful in the film. Because he wields neither the power nor status to impose his wisdom on others, he resorts to the same tactics employed by Bre'r Rabbit in his tales—he uses his superior wit to prevail over stronger adversaries.

Initial reviews of Song of the South were overwhelmingly favorable in terms of the film's entertainment value, but mixed as far as the racial element was concerned.

Some black newspapers and organizations wholeheartedly supported the film, touting it as one that would actually help overcome attitudes of racism. But some others, the N.A.A.C.P. for example, noted the "remarkable artistic merit" of the film, but deplored "the impression that it gives of an idyllic master-slave relationship."

This statement poses a couple of problems. Since it is certainly understandable that the film research department at the N.A.A.C.P. was not its primary thrust, the organization can be forgiven for one relatively slight misinterpretation of the film. Set in Georgia in the 1880's *Song of the South* depicts a *post-slavery* plantation, but it probably would be safe to assume that Uncle Remus was a *former* slave.

A more problematic aspect of the N.A.A.C.P.'s statement is that it seems to imply a "Catch-22" attitude toward any film set in this time period. If negative (but perhaps realistic) black-white relationships are depicted, the film is guaranteed to come under fire for perpetuating an ugly element of our historical past. But if positive, (perhaps less realistic) black-white relationships are depicted, the film is criticized for being too "idyllic."

The subsequent shame of it all is that *Song of the South* remains indefinitely shelved in this country. The apparent trade-off is that while the Japanese can enjoy *Song of the South* we, in turn, can go to the video store and rent the anti-Japanese World War II cartoons that are unavailable in their country. How's that for an example of winning the war, but losing the battle!

During the war years ethnic sensitivity was largely ignored, but by the 1950's Hollywood had for the most part moved away from racial caricature as a source of humor. By the 1960's most cartoon criticism had shifted to the violence issue, and except for some of Ralph Bakshi's adult-oriented forays into the genre, the issue of racism in animation has simmered on the back burner for almost a literal lifetime.

All of this only adds to the irony of the Disney studio being the one to get the cauldron bubbling again. Just when you think it's safe to trust black characters in white gloves, Mickey Mouse and Michael Jackson both take big falls in the same year. The need for a new sensitivity will inevitably be reflected in projects currently on the Disney planning board.

And slated for 1995, just in time to put Disney to the test, is the upcoming feature *Pocahontas.* With Major League Baseball out on strike and no chance for the Braves or Indians to make the World Series, the American Indian lobby may be able to use a new, high-profile target, and *Pocahontas* may just be the big deer they're hunting for.

Of course in the aftermath of *Aladdin,* Disney will be aiming for ultimate political correctness, but those cynical of the high profit motive Michael Eisner epitomizes at Disney can probably envision what's going on behind the scenes right now. A dejected Eisner is seen entering another story planning session for *Pocahontas.* "I hate to waste all of your hard work," he says, "but we've got to change some things. That modernized version, with Pocahontas as the hard-drinking Madame of a quasi-legal, tax-exempt gambling casino—that's out . . . definitely out!

Tim Smith is an educator and animation historian who frequently contributes to ANIMATO!



From The Inkwell

Credit Where Credit is Due....

Credit...I've been thinking a lot about credit these days. No, not my over-the-limit MasterCard, but about acknowledging influences or contributions.

Why can't Michael Eisner just come out and say, "Sure we were influenced by the late Dr. Tezuka's *Kimba the White Lion*, and we should have given him a 'thank you' in our credit roll."? Of course, I won't get an answer from the folks at Disney, so I suppose this is just a rhetorical question, but wouldn't an action such as that set a healthy precedent?

The phrase "there's nothing new under the sun," is one of the few hoary old phrases I've heard a million times in my life that actually is pretty much true, especially when it comes to creative endeavors. Many of the people I've interviewed quickly and proudly admit who've influenced them. So why can't the Disney corporate structure own up to the obvious? They must be afraid that an admission would undoubtedly cost them something. Well, they're lucky Dr. Tezuka's heirs are not the kind of people to slap them with a lawsuit. I bet, though, it will be years before the company attempts another "original" animated production.

Speaking of credit...

Gene Gumbs is the unsung hero behind the scenes at **ANIMATO!**. Pat and I give Gene our lay-out ideas, and he manages to make them work. Gene's challenge this issue was how to fit everything I gave him into Issue 30. Well, he came up with a series of solutions, including a slightly smaller type size which allowed us to give you (as they say in commercials) more of what you buy **ANIMATO!** for. (Please excuse my dangling participle!)

Pat and I have gone from 54 pages to 72 pages in two years time, and anticipate making the jump to 80 pages sometime in 1995. Our circulation has grown to about 4,500, and has gone from just comic book shops to mainstream bookstores and newstands. Thanks to our spouses, readers, contributors, the friends who make up an informal board of directors, distributors and advertisers, **ANIMATO!** keeps on growing!

John Kricfalusi: An Open Letter

Dear John,

Lately, you've been the subject of a fair amount of ink in various comic book publications. Most of the articles have not been just about your new comic book project from Marvel (entitled *Comic Book*), but rather they've focused on either your opinions about writers or reactions to your opinions.

It seems that to distinguish the creative process you have at Spumco from the creative process at other studios, you've made it your business to discuss the inferiority of cartoons that begin with a script. I don't blame you for wanting to distance what you've tried to do in animation with the run-of-the-mill Saturday morning dreck. I understand that the combination of lack of respect for the target audience and the economics which created cartoons that were weak on animation and strong on "witty" dialogue is something you loathe.

Guess what? So do I, and about five zillion other animation fans old enough to know better.

We all get the point. I don't necessarily agree with your premise that writers (storytellers who work with words rather than images) have no place in animation, but you're certainly entitled to your opinion.

The trouble is your rant is getting old, and is, quite frankly, creating an image of a guy spewing sour grapes. It's been almost two years since you lost *Ren and Stimpy*, but your tirades make it seem you can't get over that unfortunate incident.

Put simply and with no offense intended: shaddup.

You're a talented, sincere, and bright guy, but you're not doing yourself any favors. Get an animation gig, and start producing again the type of cartoons that have made you popular. Make your points about creativity through new productions rather than interviews and columns.

What's up for our next issue?

Besides our regular columnists (Harry McCracken, Jere Guldin, and Andrew Osmond) and features, expect to see the first installment of a series of articles covering women in animation by Michelle Klein-Häss, Bob Miller's look at what Warner Brothers has in store for its classic animation characters, a profile on the activities of the Universal Pictures animation unit, and an interview with legendary voice artist Don Messick.

Look for **ANIMATO!** number 31 in late January!

Mike



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